OLD!

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CLASSIC GAMES

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RAISING THE DEAD IN CAPCOM'S GENRE-DEFINING PLATFORMER

THE MAKING OF COMBAT LYNX

INSIDE THE COCKPIT OF DURELL SOFTWARE'S HELICOPTER HIT

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HOW THE QUIRKY B-MOVIE PASTICHE CAME TO BE

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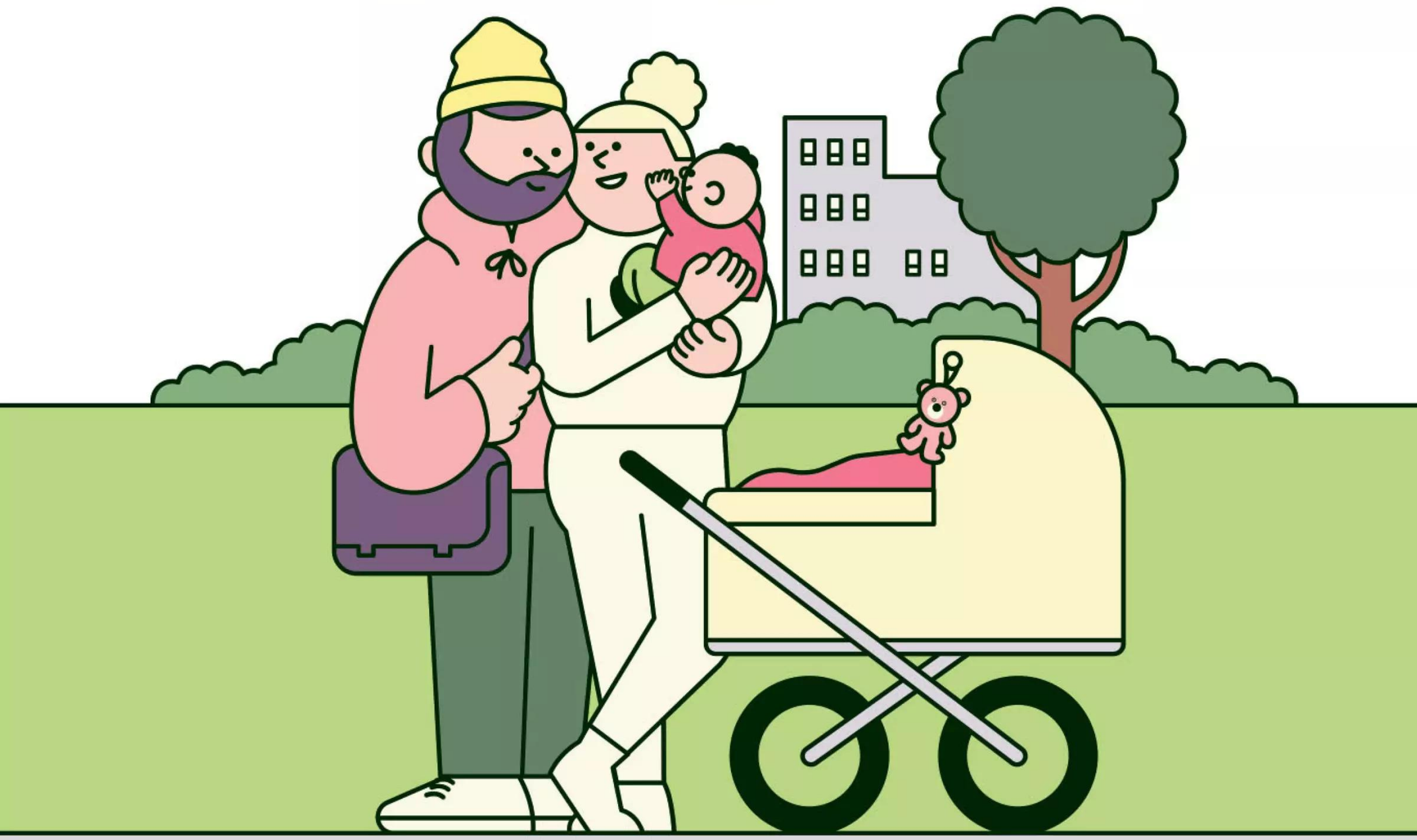

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THE RETROBATES

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE INDIANA JONES VIDEOGAME?

DARRAN JONES

Fate Of Atlantis is a cracking adventure, but I've got a real soft spot for *Infernal Machine*, which I thoroughly enjoyed on the N64 recently.
Expertise: Juggling a gorgeous wife, two beautiful girls and an award-winning magazine, all under one roof!
Currently playing: *Indiana Jones And The Great Circle*
Favourite game of all time: *OutRun 2006: Coast 2 Coast*

TIM EMPEY

I was very impressed with *The Great Circle*, it really felt like I was playing an *Indiana Jones* film, great stuff.
Expertise: Finishing Game Pass games before they go
Currently playing: *Blasphemous 2*
Favourite game of all time: *God Hand*

NICK THORPE

Indiana Jones' Greatest Adventures on the SNES always stands out to me. A lot of that is admittedly down to the super impressive Mode 7 mine cart ride.
Expertise: Owning five Master Systems and a Mark III
Currently playing: *Xenoblade Chronicles X: Definitive Edition*
Favourite game of all time: *Sonic The Hedgehog*

ANDY SALTER

I once tried to play an *Indiana Jones* game on the Spectrum, I think it was *Last Crusade*. I gave up after five minutes.
Expertise: Modding games, no 'vanilla' versions for me, thanks!
Currently modding: *RTR: Imperium Surrectum*
Favourite game of all time: *Rome: Total War* although I guess it's the *Remastered* edition now

RORY MILNE

I like them all for different reasons, so this is tough. I'll say *Raiders*, because despite its complexity playing it takes me back to simpler times.
Expertise: The game that I'm writing about at the time of writing
Currently playing: *Toy Story*
Favourite game of all time: *Tempest*

STUART HUNT

Lego Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures. The series perfectly captures the sidekick element of the films – and the comedic arguing. It's also the first game I completed with my son, so holds a special place in my collection.
Expertise: Games with flying bits in them
Currently playing: *Mario Kart 8 Deluxe*
Favourite game of all time: *Donkey Kong*

GRAEME MASON

Until recently it was the arcade game *Indiana Jones And The Temple Of Doom*. *The Great Circle* has changed that.
Expertise: Adjusting the tape azimuth with a screwdriver
Currently playing: *Avowed*
Favourite game of all time: *Resident Evil 4*

ANDREW FISHER

Indiana Jones In The Lost Kingdom on the C64 – this 1984 title cleverly doesn't explain how you solve the game's six screens.
Expertise: Forty years of gaming, from Commodore 64 to Switch
Currently playing: Open beta of a certain forthcoming EA game
Favourite game of all time: *Wizball*

PAUL ROSE

I'm going to go with *Indiana Jones And The Last Crusade* on the Atari ST.
Expertise: Winging it
Currently playing: *Indiana Jones And The Great Circle*
Favourite game of all time: *Half-Life 2*

LOADING...

***Raiders Of The Lost Ark* made a huge impression on me as a kid, so much so that I would regularly refer to myself as Indi-Darran Jones at school.** Alongside *Star Wars*, it cemented Harrison Ford as one of my favourite actors and highlighted a world of derring-do and adventure that I found absolutely fascinating.

Needless to say I'm also a big fan of the numerous *Indiana Jones* games that have been released, and while they've not always hit the mark, they've always been very good at depicting Indy's on-screen shenanigans, whether it's running away from boulders, escaping in mine carts or punching out Nazis (no one punches like Harrison Ford). What a delight then to not only have Indy on the cover, but to also speak to the many developers who have helped bring his digital exploits to life over the years.

Other highlights of this issue include a look at the best games you can play on Sega's Master System, the creation of *Combat Lynx* and *Destroy All Humans!*, a new Magazine Craft with Dave Kelsall and an exclusive interview with Dylan Cuthbert. We've also got two great Ultimate Guides, covering *STALKER: Shadow Of Chernobyl* and *Ghosts 'N Goblins*. Now excuse me, I'm off to play *Indiana Jones And The Great Circle*.

Stay safe and enjoy the magazine.

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Master System ESSENTIALS
THE EVOLUTION OF INDIANA JONES GAMES
INTREPID DEVELOPERS BRAVE ROLLING BOULDERS AND PERILOUS MINE CARTS TO UNEARTH THE DIGITAL JOURNEY OF DR JONES

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Darran can put up with a lot of things from naughty foreign exchange students, but he does draw the line when it comes to his N64

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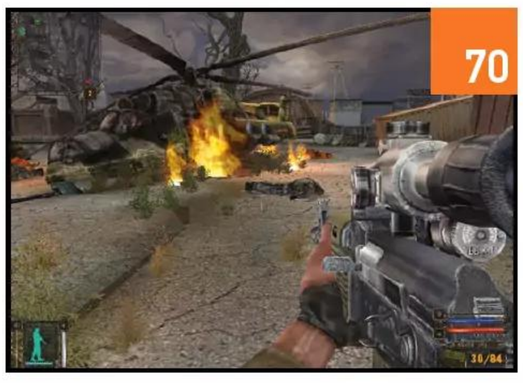

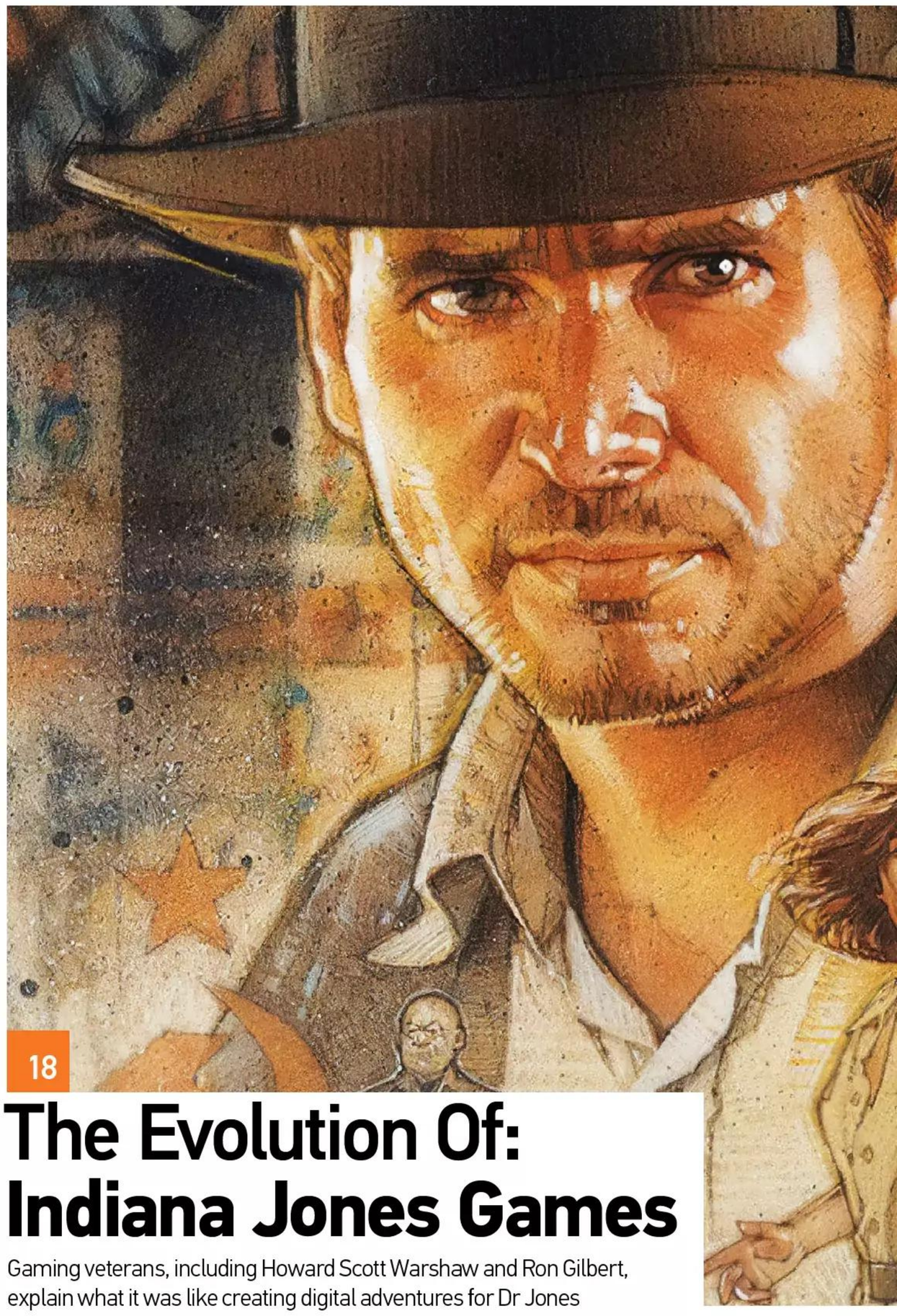

The Evolution Of: Indiana Jones Games

Gaming veterans, including Howard Scott Warshaw and Ron Gilbert, explain what it was like creating digital adventures for Dr Jones

Ultimate Guide: Ghosts 'N Goblins

Martyn Carroll plays through Capcom's challenging supernatural-themed platformer

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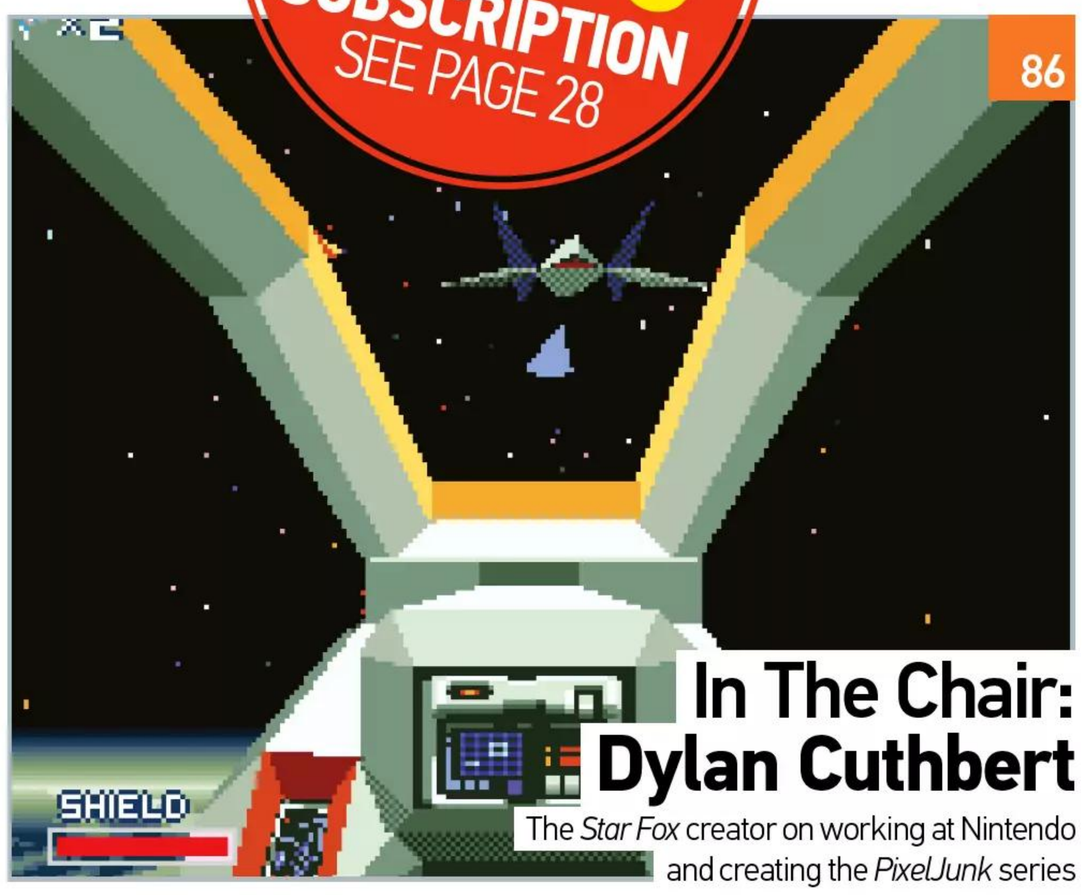

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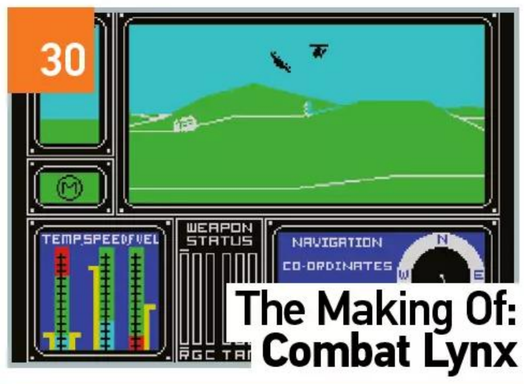

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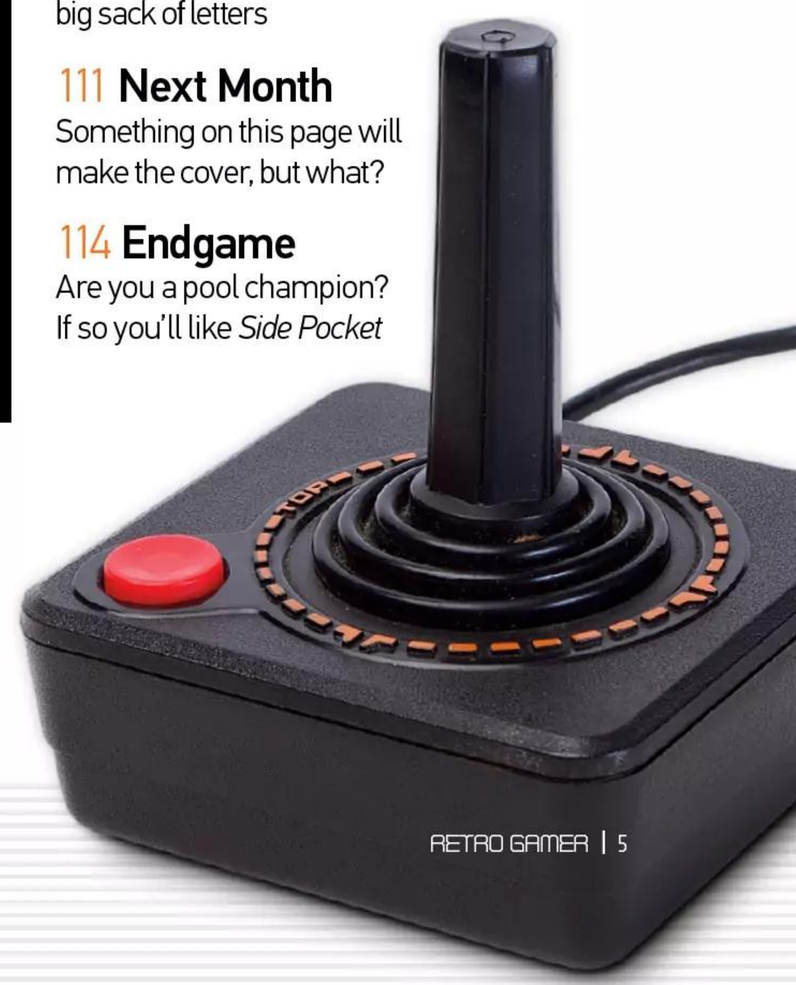
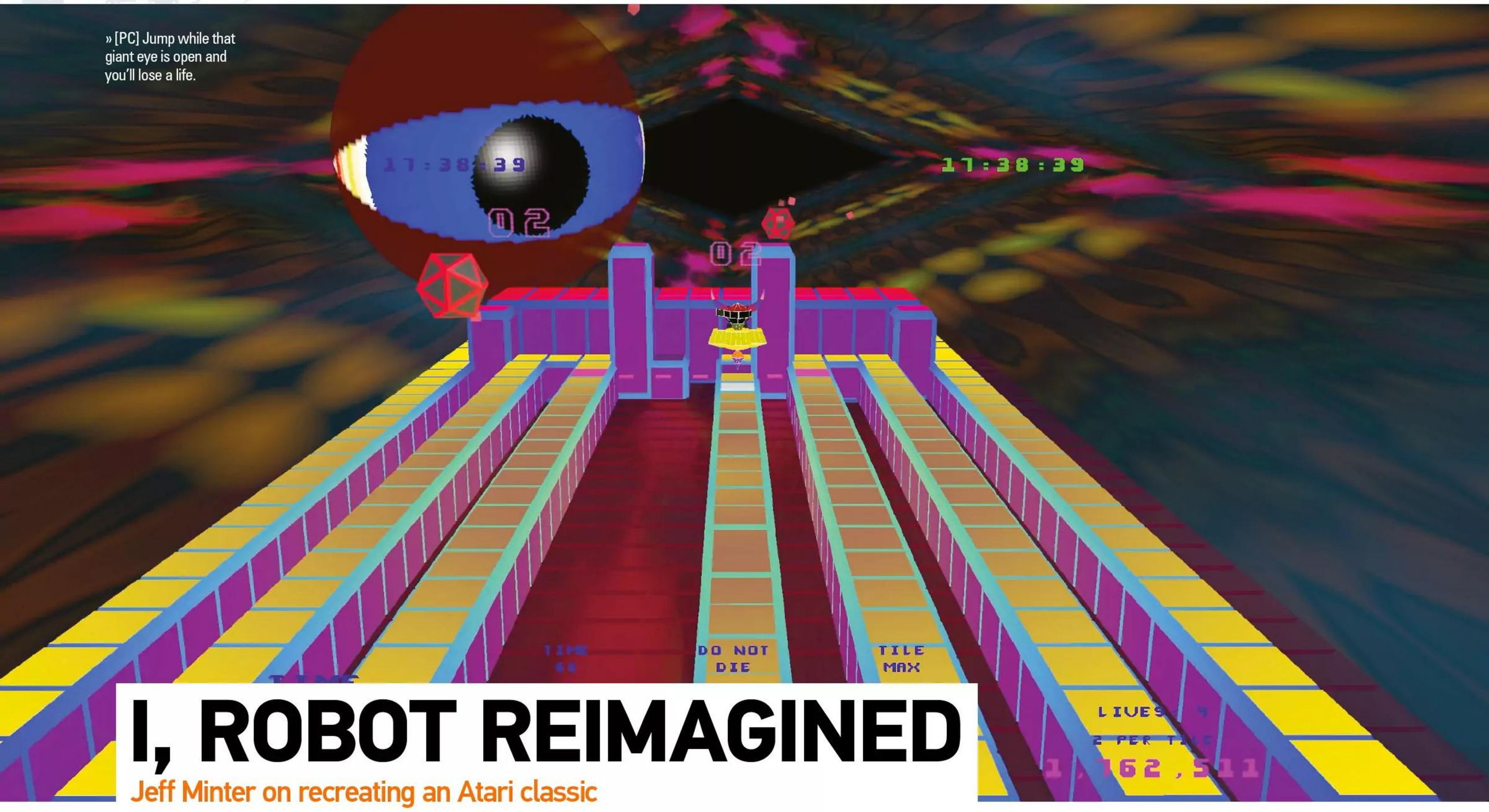
The Making Of: Destroy All Humans!

Key members of the Pandemic game revisit their creative take on the open-world adventure





» [PC] Jump while that giant eye is open and you'll lose a life.

I, ROBOT REIMAGINED

Jeff Minter on recreating an Atari classic

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Our regular columnist recalls some of his favourite multiplayer games that he still enjoys

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Time waits for no man, but it does for Nick Thorpe, he's special like that

Few independent game developers are as well recognised as Llamasoft's Jeff Minter. In 2024 he was not only the subject of a fantastic compilation by Digital Eclipse, but also released *Akka Arrh*, his psychedelic take on a cancelled Atari game from the Eighties.

His collaboration with Atari clearly went well as Jeff is once again working with his partner Ivan 'Giles' Zorzin on a brand-new reimagining of the Atari classic, *I, Robot*. Jeff can actually trace his first experience with Atari's game all the way back to the Eighties. "I saw it in an arcade in London, and then a friend of mine, [videogame journalist] Tony Takoushi bought the cabinet for his house," he says. "I remember going around and playing on it quite a bit and I was intrigued by it, because obviously it was very new with this solid polygonal look which had never really been used in the arcade before."

» [PC] So why does Jeff Minter keep remaking Dave Theurer games? "I guess I just like his design. And it's quite weird, because I've never actually spoken to him," we're told.

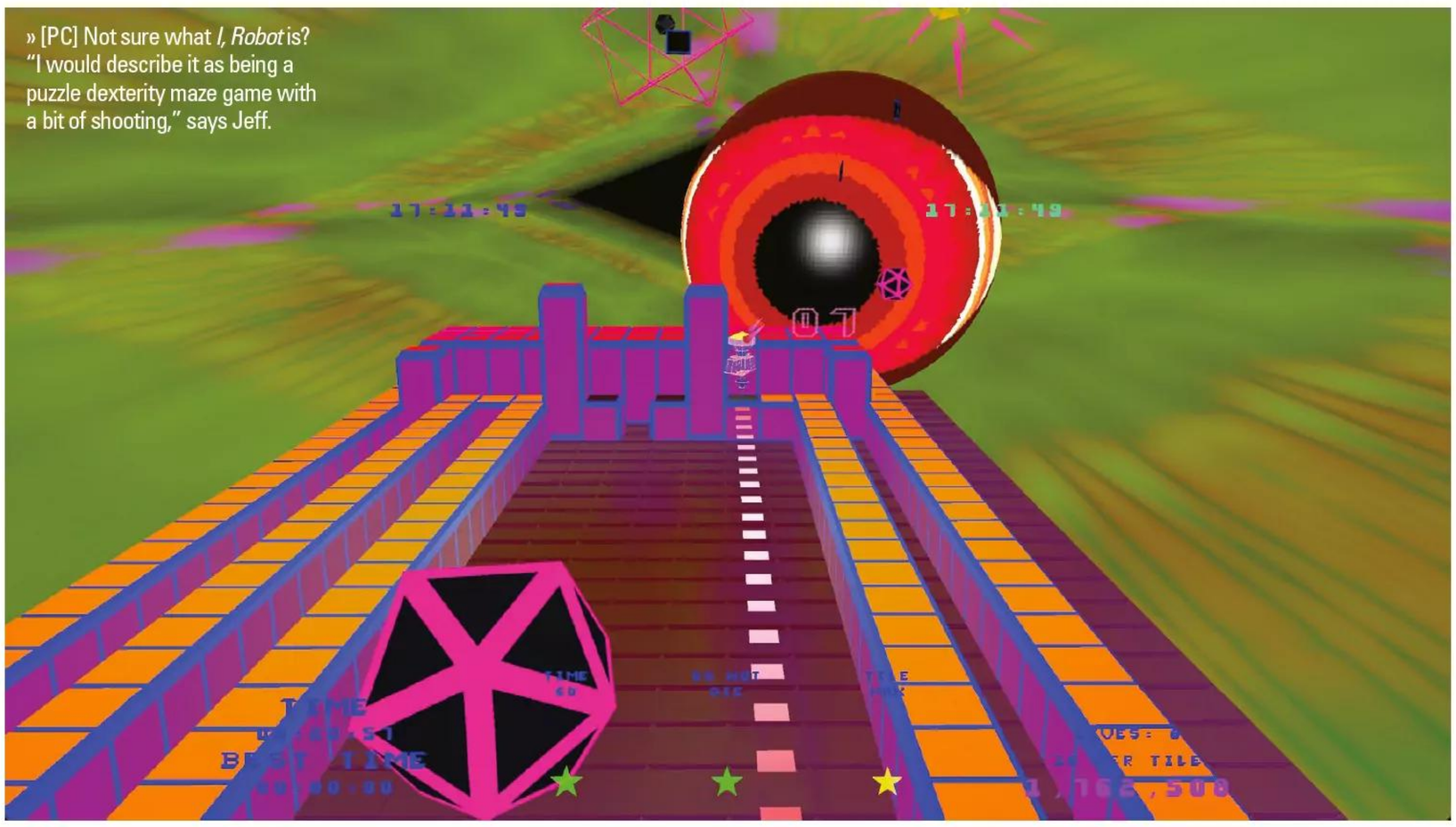
As great as the original *I, Robot* is, it can perhaps be a little too abstract for its own good, something which Jeff is well aware of. "I've tried to make it more accessible," he explains. "I think some people found the original one a bit obscure. When the guys were testing and comparing the two versions, they said that quite often people would come on to the original one and not really know what they were supposed to be doing and it was kind of a bit more clear on my version."

Accessibility isn't the only change that Jeff has made. "I think it's a bit faster, although I won't say it's more violent," he says. "I mean, the transition stage between the levels is definitely a bit more shooty than it was. It was kind of an incidental thing back then, but now it's much more full on. I've obviously added a bunch more levels to the game as well."

» Jeff Minter has been making independent games since the Eighties, with his latest project being a remake of Atari's *I, Robot*

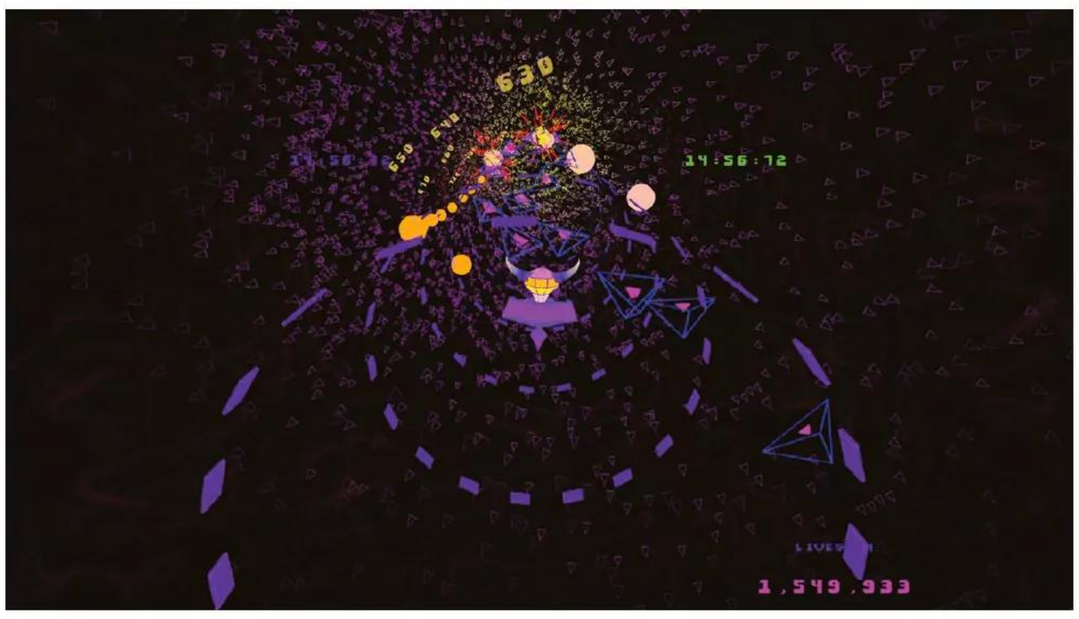
So far so Minter, but it wouldn't truly be a Llamasoft game without some sort of light synth feature, and *I, Robot* features one that Jeff has been evolving for the past year. "I've been meaning to update what we call the Neon Core, which is the lights part of our engine that we've had for ages," Jeff explains. "It needed an update, and I'm developing that into both a standalone light, which I can use, that is hooked up to knobs and dials and synth-type controls, so I can actually use that for performances. I can take the core of that and put that into a game as well, which is what I've got running in iRoot. So, I can literally design the thing on my full-scale light synth and plug the output into the game to use in [*I, Robot*]. It's an ongoing development which will be in all our games moving forward."

Virtual reality is something else that can be linked to Jeff in recent



» [PC] Not sure what *I, Robot* is? "I would describe it as being a puzzle dexterity maze game with a bit of shooting," says Jeff.

» We also discussed the recent Llamasoft Collection with Jeff. "I just feel so privileged to have had that done. It's something to stand the test of time. After I'm gone, it will still be there."



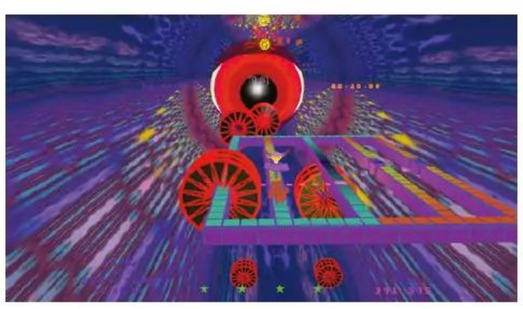
» [PC] "I think technically it's really quite simple," Jeff says. "There's nothing that's particularly demanding, which is quite nice, because it means it runs well on the Switch."

years, and *I, Robot* also embraces VR. "I think VR is really well suited to doing the style of arcade games that I do because it's a very *Tron* feeling," Jeff admits, when we ask him about his interest in adding VR to many of his newer games. "You feel like you're inside an Eighties arcade game, which is exactly the kind of experience I was hoping for out of VR. And in this game, it's particularly nice because it looks lovely in VR. It's presented in front of you. It's almost like a little diorama, the level that you're playing on, and you can move your head around and I found that I consistently get better scores playing in VR than I do outside of VR."

> "I've tried to make it more accessible. I think some people found the original one a bit obscure"
>
> **JEFF MINTER**

Jeff is equally pleased with how his relationship with the revitalised Atari is going. "I think I'm happy, they're happy, and for me it's a job, so I get paid," he says. "I'm not worried about having to do marketing and all that stuff, which I'm terrible at anyway. I'll make the games and it means I'm not worried about whether or not it's going to sell, as they will handle all that." There's another aspect of the partnership that Jeff likes. "They trust me," he admits. "They give me complete creative freedom and they don't lean on me to do anything. They let me wander through their back catalogue, say what I'd like to do, and then they're absolutely fine with me doing whatever I want to. I think they trust me that I'm going to come out with something that's going to be really nice."

And *I, Robot* certainly looks nice and that trust means that Jeff is already working on a third Atari project in the same vein, although he's not ready to talk about it just yet. "I looked through [Atari's IP] and a couple of things appealed to me, and basically, the two things I picked out were the two things which they had on the top of their list which they thought would be best for me to do." We can't wait to find out what it is. ✱

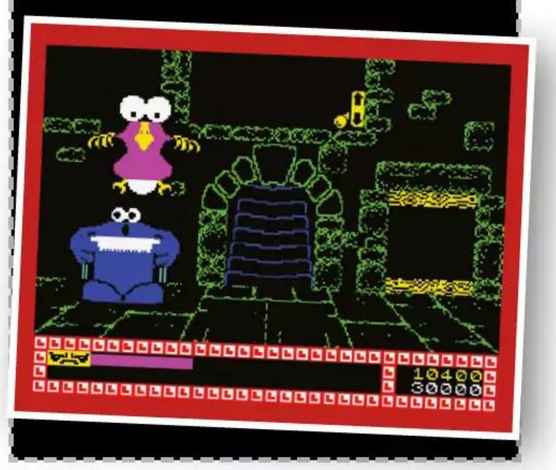


» [PC] Why remake *I, Robot*? "I quite like looking at some of the more obscure stuff that never really had a chance to shine back in the day," Jeff says.

DON PRIESTLEY PASSES

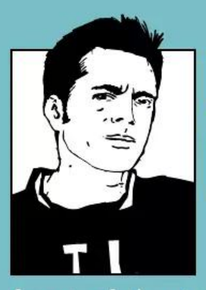
It recently come to our attention that Don Priestley, the creator of *Flunky*, *The Trapdoor*, *Gregory Loses His Clock* and several other classic ZX Spectrum games has passed away after a short illness. Martyn Carroll spotted the news on Facebook, after one of Don's friends made a post about his passing.

Unlike many other bedroom coders of the Eighties, Don made his gaming debut in his 40s, after deciding to learn computer coding with his son in a night-school class. After completing his course he struck up a relationship with Bug Byte and released several games for the ZX81 and Spectrum, including *Mazogs* and *The Dictator*. Several big games for DK'Troniks and Piranha followed, including *The Trap Door* and *Flunky*, but Don didn't stay in the industry telling our own Darran Jones in a 2005 *games™* interview, "I came to the conclusion that the days of the lone programmer in his attic were becoming numbered. I didn't even try to find programming employment and simply went back to teaching." Our thoughts go out to all of Don's friends and family.



Who is Iain Lee?
Iain Lee is a freelance counsellor who loves gaming, particularly retro gaming. You can get more information about Iain by visiting iainleecounselling.com or heading over to patreon.com/iainandKatherine

Multiplayer heaven



Everyone knows that *GoldenEye 007* is one of the greatest multiplayer games of all time. I hesitated about putting 'one of' in there because could it not be considered the GOAT? It was an amazing experience, sat in front of the telly with three mates all screaming at each other and getting angry with whoever chose Oddjob. And it still stands up. Anyone who says it's unplayable now needs to give their head a wobble. It takes a few minutes to get used to the controls but once you're in, you're in.

Another great multiplayer game came out recently. *Split Fiction* is made by the team who brought us the incredibly sweary *A Way Out*, a two-player co-op prison break type affair. I played it with my then 11-year-old son which may not have been the best parenting idea I've ever had. Please God don't tell your mum about the number of swears in there.

A Way Out had everything – it was challenging, funny and had a great story. Proper twists and turns. Excuse any typos in this piece because *Spilt Fiction* is installing on the Xbox and I kind of want to get it on ASAP. I've already seen one bit where you have to complete a reCAPTCHA tick-all-the-boxes-with-a-bicycle-in challenge before you can defuse a bomb. Fantastic.

Playing with more than one person in the early Eighties on a home micro was tricky. I didn't have joysticks for my BBC so if I wanted to play a mate, we'd have to squash up next to each other in front of the keyboard and use some weird configuration of keys. Anything other than Z and X for left and right just does not sit easy with me. You also had to have a friend around and I lived a bit far away from town for that to be a regular occurrence.

But when it did happen it was magic. *The Way Of The Exploding Fist* was a great solo game but playing with someone else seemed to elevate it to an almost spiritual experience. For some reason every 11-year-old was obsessed with martial arts, Bruce Lee and ninjas. So to be able to experience that in a virtual setting with another human being was immense.

Gauntlet was a blast in the arcade. Four of you crowded around the screen screaming at each other to catch up and stop messing about. That sounds a bit Kenneth Williams and we probably used another seven-letter word instead of messing, but you get the idea.

While there is something beautiful about ordering pizza and playing in the same room, it just isn't practical for most of us these days. All my friends live some distance away, as do my kids. And while we do play some *COD* when they're over, I think I might actually prefer doing it with headsets on and 50 miles between us. Getting that text from Kim asking me if I'm free, me dropping everything to go and play. Absolute treasured moments.

Speaking of which… the phone has just pinged… I got my call up papers from my boy. Must dash!

> "Playing with more than one person in the early Eighties on a home micro was tricky"

Do you agree with Iain's thoughts? Contact us at:

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Who is Paul Rose?
Paul is probably better known as Mr Biffo – the creator of legendary teletext games magazine *Digitiser*. These days, he mostly writes his videogame ramblings over at Digitiser2000.com. If you want more Biffo in your eyes, you can catch him as the host of *Digitizer The Show* at www.bit.ly/biffo2000.

Reflecting on war

What's your favourite World War II-themed game? I mean, you're spoiled for choice. *Medal Of Honor* is an obvious one for me. I went to the launch at the Imperial War Museum, where they gave a presentation making plenty of Steven Spielberg's supposed involvement, and how it was the videogame equivalent of *Saving Private Ryan*.

Which is all well and good, but, let's face it, *Saving Private Ryan* is a movie. It doesn't shy away from the brutality of war, whereas *Medal Of Honor* is… well, it's a shoot-'em up – just a more evolved version of *Space Invaders* or *Gun Fight*.

As I write this, I've just returned from Poland. I was there filming some videos for my YouTube channel; various bits and pieces to do with mysteries of the Second World War. Among the places we visited were Project Riese, looking into the Die Glocke conspiracy theory – which some of you may be familiar with from *Call Of Duty: Zombies*.

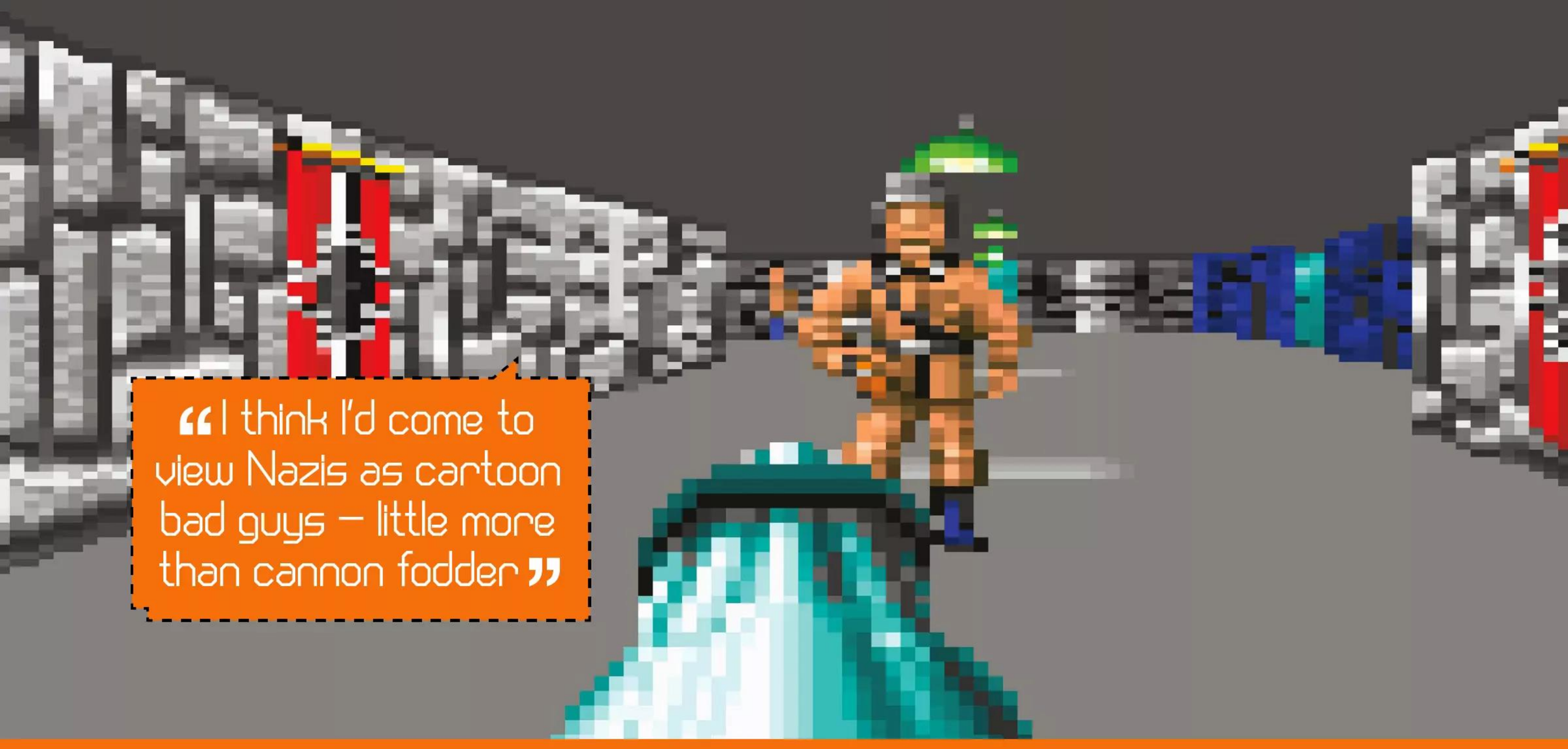
We also took a trip north to The Wolf's Lair, Hitler's hidden forest headquarters, and at first… all I could think was, "This would be a great level in a game." That's how baked into my psyche videogames are, but from the ruins themselves, to the maze of corridors within the buildings, it's pure first-person shooter.

Shortly after we arrived we actually managed to get into Hitler's bunker itself. Though it's now more or less collapsed, after the Nazis tried to blow it up at the end of the war, and only the outer corridors are accessible, I filmed myself walking through them. Upon watching it back, I heard myself mutter, "*Wolfenstein 3D*." Which was weird, because I don't remember saying anything out loud at the time.

I had a bit of a weird reaction though, towards the end of our visit, where my notion of Nazis as videogame bad guys butted up against the actions of their real-world counterparts. Gradually, the weight of where we were – and the grave decisions taken there – began to press down on me.

I've never been one who subscribes to the idea that videogames can desensitise us to violence, but… from *1942* in the arcades, to *The Great Escape* on my Spectrum through *Wolfenstein 3D*, the first *Call Of Duty* and countless others, I think I'd come to view Nazis as cartoon bad guys – little more than cannon fodder. I mean, Hitler himself shows up in *Wolfenstein 3D* as a cyborg for pity's sake.

I don't want to be a killjoy, but when I was heading to Project Riese, the thought of exploring the underground tunnels got me all a bit giddy… but then you learn that the tens of thousands of concentration camp prisoners died in its construction, and suddenly it's not so exciting. I guess I just started asking myself whether it was OK to portray Hitler as a towering cyborg with a chaingun, rather than the paranoid and deluded – and all-too-human – monster he actually was. ✱



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TerrorBytes

Richard Moss on CreatorVC's new survival horror documentary series

Horror has been intertwined with videogames for years, but what makes the genre so popular with gamers? It's a question Richard Moss hopes to answer with his new documentary series that covers everything from the beginning of the genre to pillar series such as *Resident Evil* and *Silent Hill*. Richard explains how it all came to be.

So how did *TerrorBytes* come about, Richard?
Our producer Daniel Richardson brought us the concept for an episodic deep-dive into horror in games while we were finishing work on *FPS: First-Person Shooter*, and we thought it had huge potential. After lots of discussion we decided on five themed episodes (survival horror, licensed games and homages, FMV horror, indies, 'cursed' and controversial). From there we went to audience validation and then a year ago ran an initial pre-sales campaign to help with production costs.

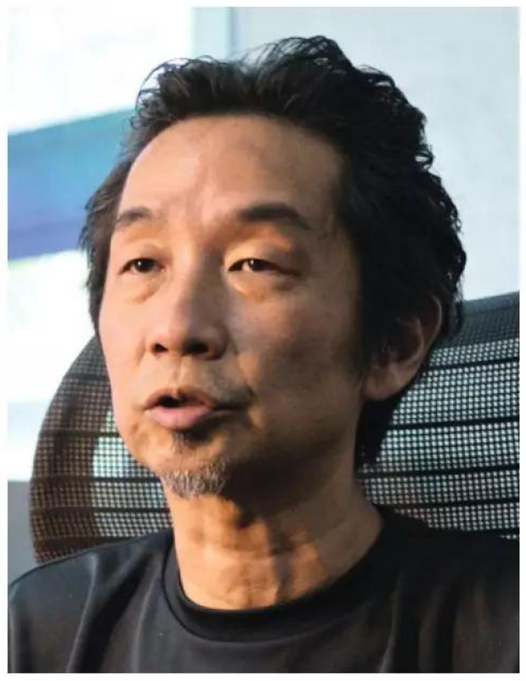
What do you like about the horror genre and why do you think it is such a good subject for videogames?
What stands out about horror, in games especially, is that it's an inversion of traditional power fantasies. It's about disempowering you and making you uncomfortable. In a typical horror game, you have scant resources, you're not athletic,

> "There's plenty of interest within the team in making a second TerrorBytes season, as there's so much more we've yet to explore in this space"
>
> **RICHARD MOSS**

TERRORBYTES
THE EVOLUTION OF HORROR GAMING
A ROBIN BLOCK PRODUCTION
SOUNDTRACK NEW RETRO WAVE MOTION GRAPHICS CHRIS STRATTON
ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS JAMES EVANS, DOMINIC WALLIS EXECUTIVE PRODUCER ROBIN BLOCK
PRODUCER DANIEL RICHARDSON WRITER/DIRECTOR RICHARD MOSS
CREATORVC
www.TERRORBYTESDOC.com
SOUNDTRACK AVAILABLE AT NEW RETRO WAVE © 2024 CREATORVC STUDIOS, INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

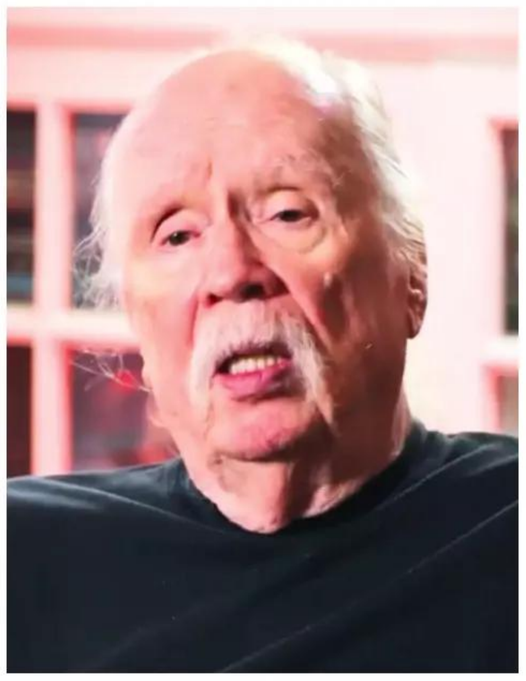
» *TerrorBytes* will be available digitally and in physical form. There's more information at terrorbytesdoc.com

» Richard Moss is a big fan of survival horror and is exploring the genre with the new five-part series *TerrorBytes*.



» *Silent Hill* composer Akira Yamaoka is one of several Japanese creatives Richard has interviewed for the *TerrorBytes* series.

» Jane Jenson (pictured) Kaytlin Blackmore, Heidi Anderson and Dawn Lunsford discuss everything from *Clock Tower* to *The Last Of Us*.



» Horror maestro John Carpenter is involved in the project, after being involved with CreatorVC's *In Search Of Darkness*.

» The first episode of *TerrorBytes* does a great job of establishing what the series will cover.

» [GameCube] *Eternal Darkness: Sanity's Requiem* is included, with input from creator Denis Dyack.

» [PlayStation] It wasn't the first example, but *Resident Evil* cemented many of the survival horror genre's foundations.

» [PC] The episode dealing with licenses covers everything from *The Evil Dead* games to *The Thing*.

» [PC] The impact of music in games like the *Silent Hill* series is also examined in the series.

you're not especially smart; you're just trying to get through this extraordinary situation. And being in control of a relatable character going through and surviving trauma can be an incredibly powerful, cathartic experience.

The episodes have some great interviewees. How hard was it to track them down?

I'm amazed at the cast we landed. John Carpenter and Corey Taylor came through our sister project *In Search Of Darkness*, but the rest were just me and Dan tracking folks down. We got nearly everyone we wanted, too. Roberta Williams, Jane Jensen and John Romero are a few of my personal highlights, while Akira Yamaoka and Swery were massive gets, and the wealth of insight from journeyman designer Brian Gomez was one among many unexpected boons.

You've currently got five episodes planned. Is there the possibility of any more?

Yes. There's plenty of interest within the team in making a second TerrorBytes season, as there's so much more we've yet to explore in this space. But it depends on whether we can see sufficient demand.

Is there any game that you would consider to be the definitive horror game?

That's tricky. Horror games – broadly speaking – are not defined by their mechanics. They're about vibes and feeling, and when all's said and done horror can show up in any kind of game. So I'd say there are tent pole horror games, some of which tend to be definitive within their niche (like *Resident Evil 1* and *4*, for instance, or *Amnesia: The Dark Descent* for a big chunk of indie horror), but I'm not sure it's possible to ascribe one game as definitive of all horror.

What generation of hardware do you feel was the most important for enhancing the popularity of horror games?

I'd say the original PlayStation – and the late-486/early Pentium era on PC – was the key here. Horror games before that struggled on both atmosphere and scares, but the PS1 offered just enough fidelity for effective horror. And the hard-to-parse chunky pixels and encroaching fog of those games are now getting imitated to great effect by indie horror devs.

How important is music to horror games and which composers would you consider to be leading examples in the field?

Massively. Music enhances atmosphere, puts you on edge, and tells you how to feel. And nobody does it better than *Silent Hill* series composer Akira Yamaoka, who is just the master of combining discordant moods with melancholic, ghostly melodies.

Why do you think the walking simulator has become such an effective vehicle for horror?

They're all about embodying a place and exploring it on your own, and horror thrives on this kind of loneliness, introspection, immersion and atmosphere.

Alongside JRPGs and shoot-'em-ups, retro horror games are becoming more and more expensive to collect, why do you think that is?

I know! It's wild. My producer took photos of some titles at a market and a lot of not-great retro horror games were priced over a hundred quid. I think horror fans are re-evaluating these older titles that sold or reviewed poorly and many are finding that there's something in them worth celebrating.

Where can readers watch *Terrorbytes* and how much is it?

TerrorBytes is available at terrorbytesdoc.com Pricing during our final pre-sales campaign (ending 8 April) starts at US$27.99 for a digital download of the series (about 5.5 hours combined runtime) plus a digital copy of *FPS: First-Person Shooter* and a few more bundled extras. There are also various limited-edition Blu-ray tiers for physical media lovers. ✱

BACK TO THE NOUGHTIES

» [PlayStation 3] In issue 244, Darran said that *Pure* doesn't get enough love, and that's still true today.

OCTOBER 2008 – We're on Hell's Highway this month, so Wario's feeling shaky, Rare's Piñatas are proliferating, and your ageing PS2 still has a cracking crime caper left within it. Nick Thorpe is your guide to another month of memorable gaming moments

NEWS OCTOBER 2008

Governments around the world responded to the ongoing financial crisis with major economic rescue packages. The United States government passed the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act 2008, creating a $700 billion bailout fund that focussed on purchasing unsaleable debt from banks. The UK government announced a £500 billion rescue package, which included £50 billion of direct investment in bank shares. The governments of other countries including Germany, Greece, Australia, New Zealand and the UAE all announced that they would guarantee bank deposits, in an attempt to restore confidence.

On 3 October, OJ Simpson was convicted of kidnapping and armed robbery after breaking into the hotel room of a sports memorabilia dealer and taking items at gunpoint in September 2007. He was sentenced to 33 years in jail, but was released on parole in 2017.

During the 18 October episode of *The Russell Brand Show* on Radio 2, Brand and Jonathan Ross left inappropriate messages on the answering machine of *Fawlty Towers* actor Andrew Sachs. The incident drew many complaints causing two Radio 2 executives and Brand to resign.

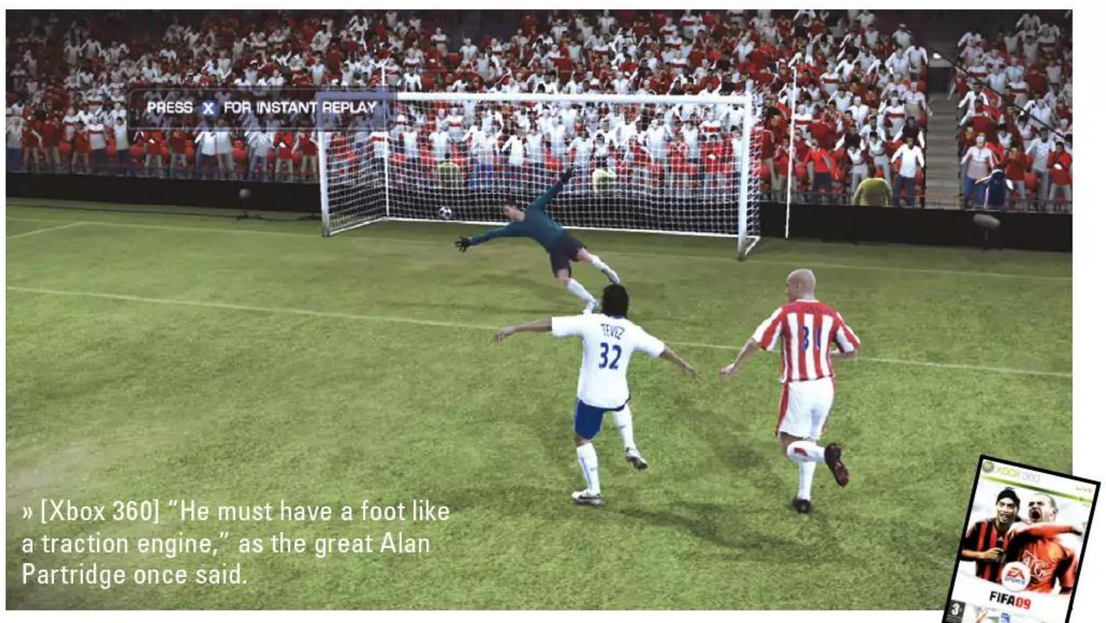
THE LATEST NEWS FROM OCTOBER 2008

Official PlayStation Magazine **had an exclusive review of *FIFA 09* last month and gave it 9/10, but was EA firmly back on top of the football world? The consensus definitely pointed in that direction.** "EA has taken its time, but finally it understands both the technicality and the raw drama of football, and it seems like it's having fun with both," concluded *360*'s 5/5 review. *Play* lamented "momentary keeper madness", but still gave it 87%, and it also scored 9/10 in *Official Xbox 360 Magazine*. The company was similarly successful with its latest golf game, *Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09*, which scored 86% in *Play* and 8/10 in both *X360* and *OXM*.

EA also published Will Wright's ambitious *Spore*, a PC exclusive that allows you to develop life forms from microscopic origins to eventual interstellar exploration. The game had received 91% in an exclusive *PC Gamer* review last month, and earned 9/10 from both *games™* and *Total PC Gaming* this month. "Despite the complexity and the volume of learning, it's intuitive and paced to gently coax you onward, nudging you in the direction of several short-term goals, but fundamentally leaving you free to play around," said *Total PC Gaming*. *Edge* gave it 7/10, claiming, "Of its first four stages, only *Civilization* offers any real replay value, leaving an immense amount riding on a botched finale, Space."

Gearbox's first-person shooter *Brothers In Arms: Hell's Highway* scored 85% in *PC Gamer*, 4/5 in *360*, 8/10 each in *OXM* and *Total PC Gaming*, 75% in *Play*, 7/10 in *OPM* and 3/5 in *360*. The story was divisive – *PC Gamer* praised the game's "genuine commitment to its characters", while *games™* criticised it for "clumsily lunging at our heartstrings". Off-road arcade racer *Pure* earned 80% from *Play*, 8/10 each from *games™* and *X360*, 7/10 each from *Edge* and *OPM*, and 3/5 from *360*. "*Pure* takes racing all the way back to basics and emphasises fun over complexity yet still incorporates enough depth to have some serious longevity," opined *X360*.

Viva Piñata: Trouble In Paradise hit the Xbox 360 this month. "Most of the alterations are really

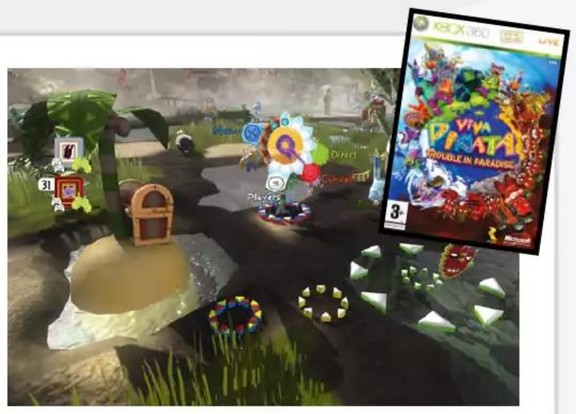


» [Xbox 360] "He must have a foot like a traction engine," as the great Alan Partridge once said.

catering for elements that needed to be fixed or, dare we say, patched in the original," said *360*'s 3/5 review. *OXM* agreed that "the bulk of the package isn't vastly different" from the original, but it scored 8/10 there, and received the same from *games™* and *Edge*. Rare's colourful critters also made it to the DS in *Viva Piñata: Pocket Paradise*. After earning 90% in *Official Nintendo Magazine* and 7/10 in *Edge* last month, it got 9/10 from *nRevolution* and 8/10 from *games™* – the latter feeling that "the franchise's natural home is on DS" due to its "superb controls".

Over on the Wii, *Wario Land: The Shake Dimension* offered bold, beautiful 2D platforming that earned it 88% from *ONM* and 6/10 from *Edge* last month. This month, *nRevolution* praised its "imaginative uses of the Wii Remote and the broad range of level scenarios", but said "if it were tougher we would respect this game a lot more". That was good for 8/10, and *games™* gave it the same. Paint-'em-up *De Blob* scored 92% in *ONM*, 7/10 in *games™* and 8/10 in *Edge*, which felt that, "Seeing the locations come back to life, the oppressed Graydians gradually escaping their prisons and becoming re-coloured through your influence, while turning the monolithic displays of the Inkt Corporation into public displays of revolution, is a unique experience."

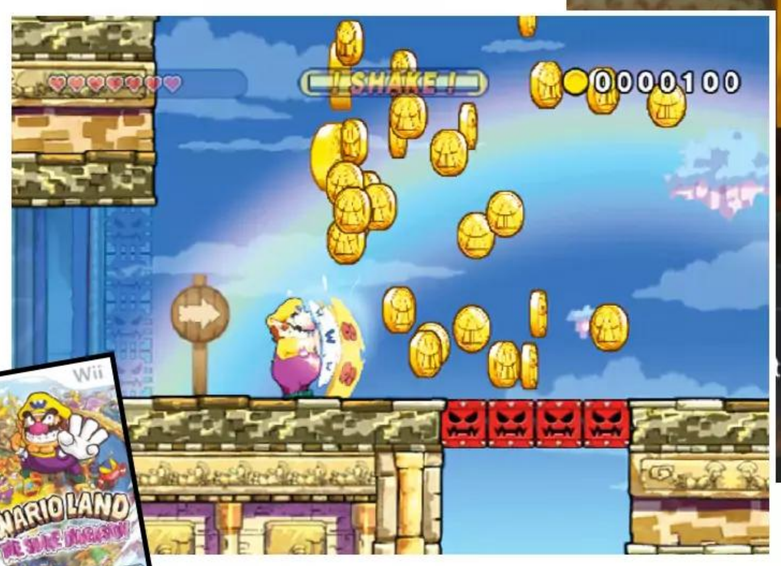
» [PC] The presence of buildings shows that we've clearly evolved beyond the tiny organism phase.



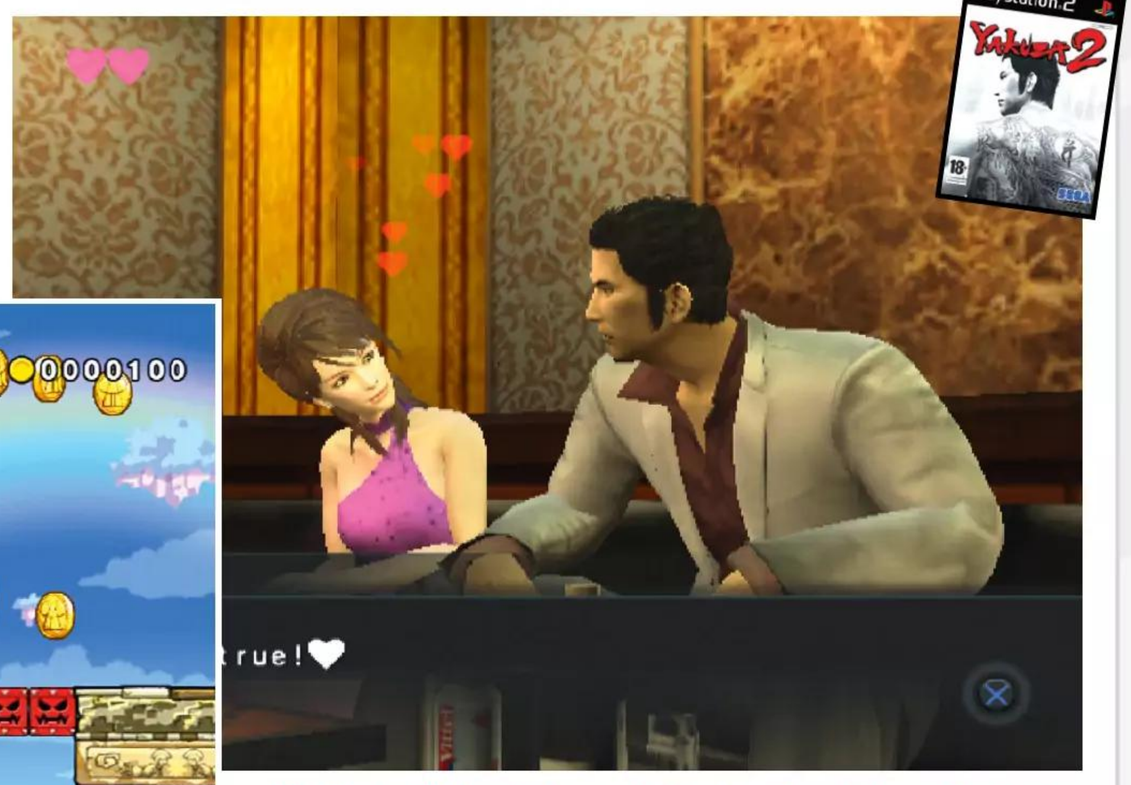
» [Xbox 360] The second *Viva Piñata* game was still good, but not a radical change from the original.

The Dreamcast rhythm action favourite *Samba De Amigo* made its way to the Wii this month, earning 8/10 from *nRevolution* and 71% from *ONM*. However, Sega's big release this month was *Yakuza 2*, which *Edge* declared "another highlight of PS2's astonishing Indian summer" in an 8/10 review. *OPM* praised its "flair for world-building" and "brutal finishers" in an 8/10 review, but *games™* gave it 6/10, feeling it to be "exactly the kind of plot-heavy, visually stylish release that would benefit hugely from being built for PlayStation 3". Our own Tim Empey gave it 79% in *Play*, saying that it was "a grand game but it does feel that it's come out way too late" advising players that they may wish to hold off for *Yakuza 3*'s English localisation.

Join us again next month for *Dead Space*, *Saint's Row 2* and much more. ✱



» [Wii] Wario adds a welcome splash of colour to this month's spread, don't you think?



» [PlayStation 2] Kiryu isn't just a brilliant brawler – he's equally adept at charming Osaka's hostesses.

CHARTS

OCTOBER 2008

PLAYSTATION 3

1 – **Beijing 2008** (Sega)
2 – **Soulcalibur IV** (Namco)
3 – **Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns Of The Patriots** (Konami)
4 – **Battlefield: Bad Company** (EA)
5 – **Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare** (Activision)

PC

1 – **The Sims 2: Apartment Life** (EA)
2 – **The Sims 2: Double Deluxe** (EA)
3 – **The Sims 2: Free Time** (EA)
4 – **World Of Warcraft: Battle Chest** (Activision)
5 – **Sins Of A Solar Empire** (Kalypso Media)

DS

1 – **Dr Kawashima's Brain Training** (Nintendo)
2 – **Guitar Hero: On Tour** (Activision)
3 – **Carnival: Funfair Games** (Take Two)
4 – **Wall-E** (THQ)
5 – **Scrabble Interactive: 2007 Edition** (Ubisoft)

MUSIC

1 – **So What** (Pink)
2 – **Sex On Fire** (Kings Of Leon)
3 – **Girls** (Sugababes)
4 – **Disturbia** (Rihanna)
5 – **Never Miss A Beat** (Kaiser Chiefs)

THIS MONTH IN...

Official PlayStation Magazine

On *Fatal Fury Battle Archives*, "The only reason this nonsense gets endlessly re-released is because an apparently still profitable hardcore of ageing arcade idiots can't be bothered to learn any moves for *Tekken*." Ouch.

games™

"I've never said that. I don't know where they got that quote from," replies Peter Molyneux when told that he'd recently been quoted as saying *Fable II* was worth 9/10. "Why would I say that? I would say 11/10 if asked."

360

"When I approached Capcom about a [*Darkstalkers*] sequel a while ago I was told that it wouldn't make any money so they didn't want to do it," says *Street Fighter IV* producer Yoshinori Ono, who urges fans to keep requesting it.

Armor Ambush

TANKS FOR THE MEMORIES

RETROREVIVAL

» ATARI 2600 » 1982 » HAL FINNEY

***Combat* is an iconic Atari 2600 game, and rightly so – it accompanied new consoles and served as a demonstration of what it could do.** However, it didn't get an awful lot of play in my house, and that's largely thanks to *Armor Ambush*. The fact that I played it with my dad at home dates it as one of the first videogames I ever encountered, as it must have been before I was even four years old. Clearly at that age I wouldn't have known what an Intellivision was, never mind that this game was based on the Intellivision game *Armor Battle*.

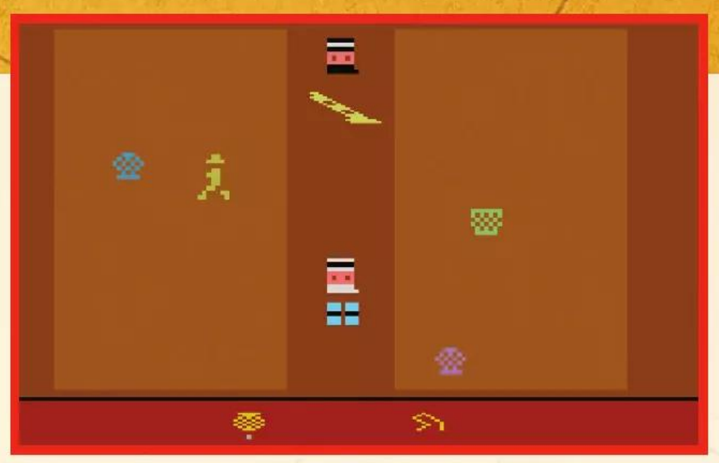
What my dad did manage to impress upon me was that while *Armor Ambush* didn't have bouncing shots or missiles that you could direct around corners, it was ultimately like *Combat* but more *complicated*. Rather than controlling one tank, you could command two alternately, pushing down on the joystick to switch between them. There were walls, sure, but there was also different terrain – woods that would slow your vehicle down, and roads that would let them move faster. What's more, your tanks would react when you fired, turning slightly so that you couldn't just keep firing in a consistent direction. It took a fair amount of instruction for my young brain to get a hold of it, but I was an acceptable opponent. I really had to be, given that the game didn't include any single-player options.

For me, it was really my first experience of how increased realism could change a basic game concept – something I'd become much more familiar with over the years, especially because *Armor Ambush* turned out to be an early indication of my dad's taste in games. He's always had a fondness for military-themed games regardless of genre, from *Command & Conquer* to *Medal Of Honor*, and generally favours realism. Our preferences may not align exactly, but we're both competitive so we'll still enjoy experiences like this.

THE EVOLUTION OF INDIANA JONES™ GAMES

THE 1982 VIDEOGAME DEBUT OF INDIANA JONES WAS FOLLOWED BY A SERIES OF ACCLAIMED RELEASES THAT CONTINUES TO THIS DAY. KEY CREATIVES BEHIND SOME OF THE GREATEST INDY GAMES TELL RETRO GAMER HOW THIS GAMING LEGACY HAS EVOLVED

WORDS BY RORY MILNE



» [Atari 2600] You don't get far in *Raiders Of The Lost Ark* without buying items at the marketplace.

» [Atari 2600] This hole in a wall in *Raiders* isn't there when you start the game; you somehow need to create it.

Long before Lucas and Spielberg's *Raiders Of The Lost* Ark appeared in cinemas in 1981, it was widely expected that its archaeologist adventurer Indiana Jones would be a big draw. This was certainly the case, so much so that *Raiders* became the most profitable and one of the best reviewed movies that year. An adaptation was soon licensed for the Atari 2600, and as *Raiders* director Steven Spielberg was a keen gamer he wanted to meet prospective developers.

He first met *Yars' Revenge* creator Howard Scott Warshaw. They hung out, and Howard won over the director by joking that he might be part of an advance alien scout party making movies to convince humanity that they mean us no harm. "I had an interview with Spielberg because he wanted to choose the programmer for *Raiders*," Howard recollects. "We chatted for a while, and then my weirdness kind of took over. I told him about my theory that he was an alien! I think he just loved that, because the next morning when I got to work he had talked to Warner or Atari and had said that he didn't need to see anyone else. I only saw him twice more during the entire development. He would come to Sunnyvale and I would give him a demo of the game, and then we would have lunch together."

> "INDIANA JONES HAD TO BE SMART AS WELL AS ADVENTUROUS AND CAPABLE. I WANTED TO DO BOTH, SO I MADE RAIDERS AN ACTION ADVENTURE GAME"
> HOWARD SCOTT WARSHAW

Since *Raiders*' hero was as adept at using his intellect to solve problems as he was at overcoming physical challenges, Howard designed his Atari 2600 adaptation as part action game/part adventure, and he looked to an earlier 2600 title for inspiration. "Indiana Jones had to be smart as well as adventurous and capable," Howard reasons. "I wanted to do both, so I made *Raiders* an action adventure game. My goal was to do the biggest adventure game that you could possibly imagine on the Atari 2600. The game *Adventure* had been genre-defining, so to me that was the launch spot. Then if I was going to stand on those shoulders I needed to do something to improve the view."

Of the many improvements made to what had been defined by *Adventure*, *Raiders*' inventory stood out as one of the most innovative. It allowed players to collect, arrange and combine multiple objects in order to solve the game's challenging puzzles. "There were cases where you had to manipulate your

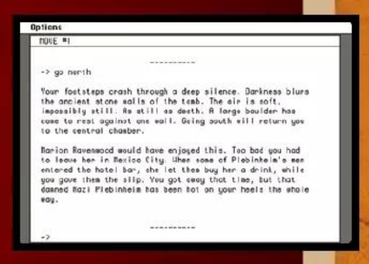
» [Atari 2600] Indy's grappling hook in *Raiders* may just be a spinning dot, but it's a very effective visual.

STAGES OF EVOLUTION: INDY IN VIDEOGAMES 1984–1988

INDIANA JONES IN THE LOST KINGDOM

■ This C64 exclusive is part puzzle game/part platformer. It sets the player the task of completing logistic puzzles across six levels, all without any instruction on how to do so! All manner of hazards hamper your attempts to platform around, from bats and butterflies, to gargoyles and deadly orbs.

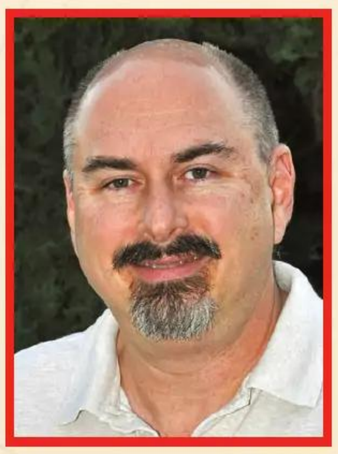
INDIANA JONES IN REVENGE OF THE ANCIENTS


Options
-> go north
Your footsteps crash through a deep silence. Darkness blurs the ancient stone walls of the tomb. The air is soft, impossibly still. As still as death. A large boulder has come to rest against one wall. Going south will return you to the central chamber.
Marion Ravenwood would have enjoyed this. Too bad you had to leave her in Rocico City. When some of Pleiohein's men entered the hotel bar, she let them buy her a drink, while you gave them the slip. You got away that time, but that damned Nazi Pleiohein has been hot on your heels the whole way.
->

■ Set in the Mexican jungle, *Revenge Of The Ancients* is a challenging text adventure where death waits around every corner. Your goal is to recover a golden key before the Nazis get it. It's visible from your starting location, but of course you can't claim it without first solving numerous puzzles.

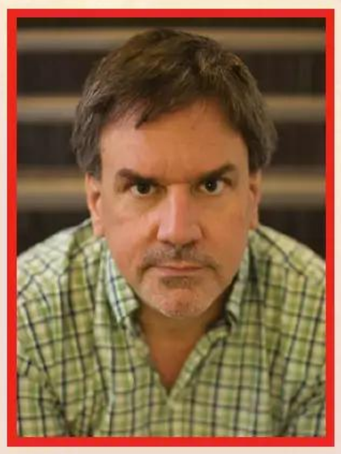
INDIANA JONES AND THE TEMPLE OF DOOM

■ Developed by the same team that made the arcade game of the same name, the NES *Temple Of Doom* has 12 variations of the stages found in the coin-op. These are referred to as waves. Helping you to beat them are pick-ups not found in the arcade title, such as guns, swords, extra lives and extra time.

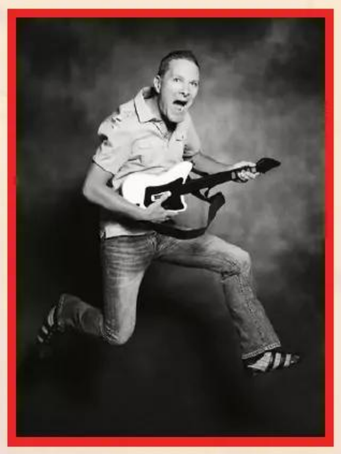


» *Raiders* developer Howard Scott Warshaw is now a therapist. He discusses the game in his book – see onceuponatari.hswarshaw.com

» After working on the *Temple Of Doom* coin-op, Mike Hally produced many more videogames before retiring from the industry.



» Ron Gilbert is still creating games, *The Last Crusade: The Graphic Adventure* remains one of his favourite projects to this day.



» Long after producing Factor 5's *Greatest Adventures* and *Infernal Machine*, Julian Eggebrecht continues to run the studio.

» Creative director at MachineGames Axel Torvenius was instrumental in the development of *The Great Circle*.

» Executive producer at Lucasfilm Games and Indy super fan Craig Derrick played a crucial role in *The Great Circle*'s creation.

Restoration work of Drew Struzan's *Indiana Jones And The Infernal Machine* art by Jan Hofmeister.

» [Arcade] There's a sequence of mine cart stages in *Temple Of Doom* with more hazards in each one.

» [Arcade] The challenging rope bridge in *Temple Of Doom* is a textbook exercise in twitch gameplay.

Stages Of Evolution:

INDY IN VIDEOGAMES

1989–1992

INDIANA JONES AND THE LAST CRUSADE: THE ACTION GAME

Released alongside Lucasfilm's graphic adventure adaptation of *The Last Crusade*, this action-focussed counterpart has you platforming, artefact collecting and whipping your way through four stages based on scenes from the movie, set in Colorado caves, a circus train, a Zeppelin and Castle Grunwald.

INDIANA JONES AND THE LAST CRUSADE

There's a variety of gameplay in this NES exclusive. It has a beat-'em-up on a ship and a sliding puzzle stage, there are top-down motorcycle chases and a maze of corridors in its Castle Grunwald level. As the plot unfolds, you get some choice over the order you play these eclectic challenges in.

THE YOUNG INDIANA JONES CHRONICLES

Based on the TV show of the same name, Jaleco's NES title sees young Indy fight in the Mexican Civil War before heading to the French and German battlefields of World War I. Each country has a selection of tough side-scrolling run-and-gun and shoot-'em-up stages, platforming levels and boss fights.

inventory in a certain way," Howard considers. "So you could have the same objects, but if they weren't in the right order you wouldn't be able to execute some challenges. Even if you got all of the objects and got down from the mesa then one of the thieves might steal your shovel. That sucked, because it meant that you had to go through all of that again!"

> "THE TEMPLE OF DOOM MOVIE WAS ALL ABOUT INDY AND HIS WHIP, SO HAVING IT ATTACHED TO HIM IN THE COIN-OP AT ALL TIMES WAS A NO-BRAINER"
>
> MIKE HALLY

Mesas – flat-topped desert hills – played an important role in Howard's game. He devised a novel way for Indy to get from one to another, and an exciting method of getting the hero down to ground level from them. "I figured Indy could use a grappling hook to get between mesas," Howard enthuses. "It was about what I could do graphically to create action and to move him around. That also made the map room work, where you saw a map that told you where the Grail was. The idea of jumping off the mesa with a parachute to get to the Grail was just because I wanted some sort of hand-eye co-ordination challenge."

» [Arcade] In the *Temple Of Doom* coin-op you rescue children from Mola Ram by whipping open their cages.

The 2600 *Raiders* adaptation sold over a million copies on its release in 1982, and in 1984 it was followed by the C64 platformer/puzzler *Indiana Jones In The Lost Kingdom*. In 1985, Atari released an arcade game based on the 1984 *Raiders* sequel *Indiana Jones And The Temple Of Doom*. Prior commitments meant that the *Star Wars* coin-op developer Mike Hally couldn't produce Atari's Indy title from the outset. "I'm sure the success of the *Star Wars* coin-ops led to a good relationship with Lucasfilm," Mike notes, "but when the *Temple Of Doom* project started I was working on *Road Runner*, so my involvement came after that. I was put on there to get the game done, because my expertise other than being a producer and lead designer was playfield design and gameplay. So I took what they had and I fully developed it."

Of course, not every scene in the *Temple Of Doom* movie was suited to being a level in the coin-op, so its development team adapted the action sequences that suited the hardware they were designing for. "If you strip out how the characters meet and how Indy gets to certain places then what you come down to is: he was in the mines to save the children and then he gets into the mine carts," Mike recalls. "Then

» [PC] One novel use of Indy's whip in the *Last Crusade* adventure involves draining a water-logged room.

Lord Robert McFalfa, I'm here to inspect the tapestries.
Are you the one with the relatives in town?
Never mind that. Who's in charge here?
Throw a punch

» [PC] The *Last Crusade* adventure lets you best opponents with conversation as well as by using your fists.

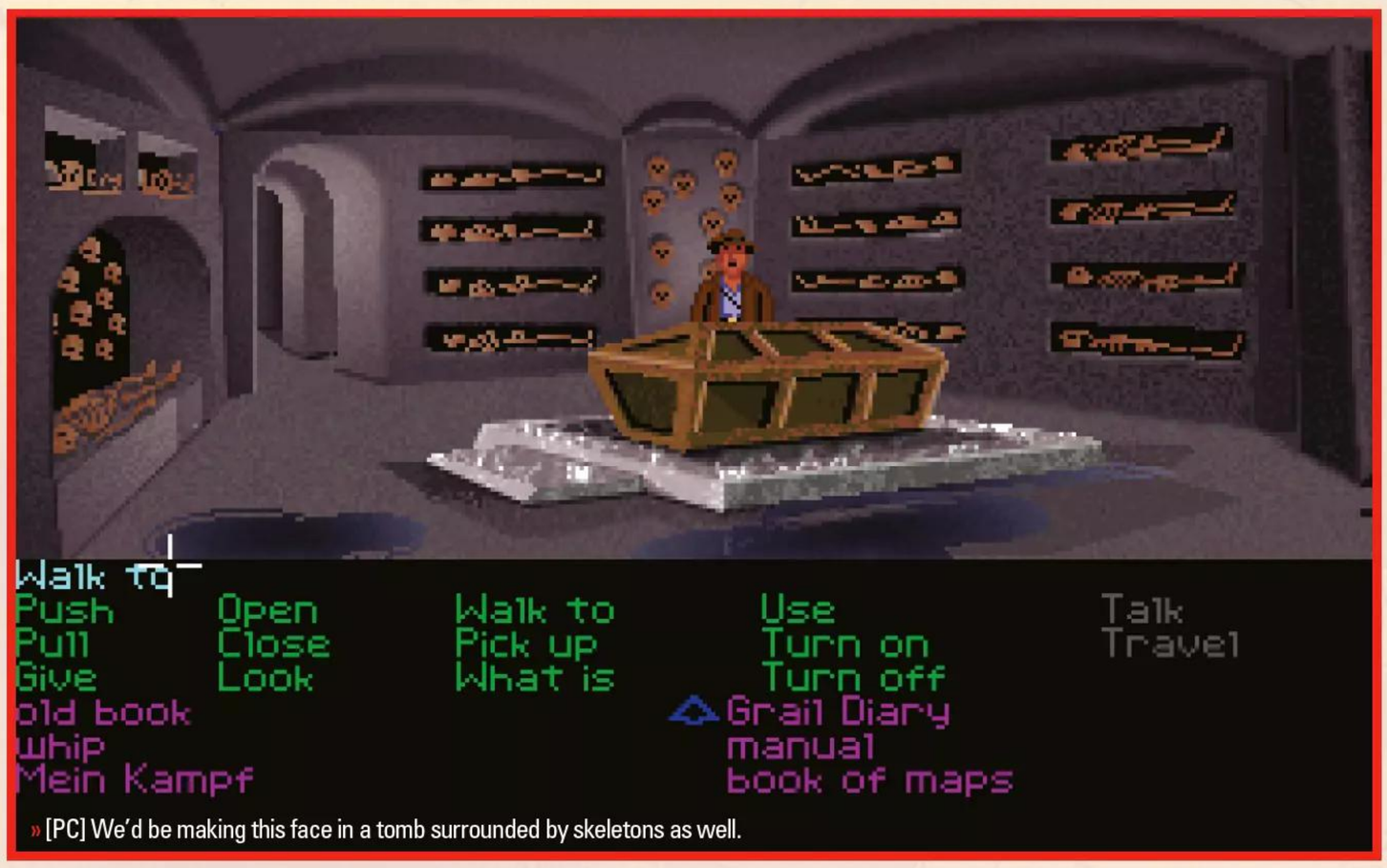
there's the Temple Of Doom, and finally there's the end sequence with the rope bridge. Those were some of the best action scenes in the movie, so those were the action sequences that were pulled from the movie for the coin-op."

The sequences adapted from the second *Indy* film involved different gameplay and mechanics, but a constant throughout the coin-op was that Indy could always rely on his whip to defend himself and use as a makeshift swing. "The *Temple Of Doom* movie was all about Indy and his whip, so having it attached to him in the coin-op at all times was a no-brainer," Mike grins. "You had to position him so that it would hit the target you wanted to hit. Then one of the most fun parts of the game was using it to swing over gaps to get over hazards. So wherever we could use the whip we did."

Indy's whip was essential in the finale of Atari's *Temple Of Doom* arcade game, which tested players' reactions by sending enemies and projectiles at them as they crossed the rope bridge seen in the film. "We put Mola Ram in between Indy and getting to the other side to save his friends," Mike remembers, "so he was constantly having to deal with flaming hearts coming from the right and Thuggees moving fast from the left. You were constantly whipping to the right and the left, and moving back and forth, so it was a timing thing, but I think we captured the essence of the movie's finale. Later on, the *Temple Of Doom* coin-op team did the NES version. I did all the design for that from scratch, based on designing a consumer game versus what you would do for a coin-op."

» [PC] Making this arcane machine function in the *Last Crusade* adventure requires spare parts and smarts.

» [PC] Numerous locations from the movie are featured in the game.



» [PC] We'd be making this face in a tomb surrounded by skeletons as well.

» [PC] Some challenges can't be overcome by talking to non-player characters, but you have to work out which ones.

» [PC] Often chatting to people in *Fate Of Atlantis* gives you hints on what you should do next.

» [PC] Sophia Hapgood was created for *Fate Of Atlantis*, and she proves to be Indy's equal in every respect.

» [PC] The adventure in *Fate Of Atlantis* takes you around the world to many interesting locations.

STAGES OF EVOLUTION:

INDY IN VIDEOGAMES

1994–2001

INSTRUMENTS OF CHAOS STARRING YOUNG INDIANA JONES

■ If this challenging Mega Drive game isn't striking you with lighting then it's sending birds or bats after you that cause you to fall off the ledge that you've spent ages platforming to! You get young Indy's whip, a pistol and grenades to defend yourself as his mission takes you around the world.

INDIANA JONES AND HIS DESKTOP ADVENTURES

■ Best described as a point-and-click action adventure, *Desktop Adventures* sets you lock-and-key puzzles that you solve through exploration of its sprawling world, speaking to non-player characters and beating foes. The latter is done much like you would in an action game, albeit by using the mouse.

INDIANA JONES AND THE INFERNAL MACHINE

■ Its level designs and top-down viewpoint set it apart from the third-person perspective PC and N64 versions, but the Game Boy Color *Infernal Machine* otherwise captures the essence of its counterparts. There's more emphasis on platforming and dealing with opponents, but this doesn't do it any harm.

Before the *Temple Of Doom* coin-op was adapted for the NES by Mike and his team in 1988, the text adventure *Indiana Jones And The Revenge Of The Ancients* appeared in 1987. Then in 1989 a computer and console action game based on that year's *Indiana Jones* movie, *Indiana Jones And The Last Crusade*, arrived. Interestingly, three Czech text adventures for the ZX Spectrum were released by Frantisek Fuka between 1985 and 1990. They're not official releases, but are still of interest if you enjoy Indy's exploits. *The Last Crusade* was also adapted as *Indiana Jones And The Last Crusade: The Graphic Adventure*, which was given to Ron Gilbert and others at Lucasfilm Games after a third-party developer let it down. "The *Indiana Jones* rights had been given to someone else, and they weren't performing. They weren't actually making the game," Ron points out. "So Lucasfilm pulled the rights back, and David Fox, Noah Falstein and I had nine months to finish the whole game – start to finish. So the three of us, who were some of the most experienced adventure game creators at the company at the time, just *jumped* on the project to try to get it done."

As with earlier *Indy* movie adaptations, consideration was given to which of *The Last Crusade*'s action scenes would work in Lucasfilm's graphic adventure. A decision was then made to adapt sequences that could be lengthy puzzles. "Noah was in charge of the action sequences, so it was him that mostly focussed on those," Ron credits. "But I remember some of the conversations were about what was going to translate well, because we couldn't put everything in the game. We certainly wanted things that would have some duration to them, like working your way through the castle and finding parts of stuff. So we at least wanted to extend the action sequences out to that degree."

An interesting approach was taken to solving puzzles in *The Last Crusade: The Graphic Adventure*, in that there were up to three solutions for each with points accrued over multiple playthroughs depending on how many solutions you found. "Some of that was based on how Sierra On-Line games calculated your score," Ron acknowledges. "But we didn't just want to have a score, so we called it the IQ – the Indy Quotient. That was a measure of how well you were being Indy. We had different ways to solve puzzles: the action way, the dialogue way and the puzzle way. To get the IQ up you played the game again to try each way."

> "WE DIDN'T JUST WANT TO HAVE A SCORE, SO WE CALLED IT THE IQ – THE INDY QUOTIENT. THAT WAS A MEASURE OF HOW WELL YOU WERE BEING INDY"
> RON GILBERT

Unlike the game's IQ points, its dialogue system was entirely original. It allowed players of Lucasfilm's game to immerse themselves in Indy's world by having conversations with its inhabitants. "The dialogue puzzles were a huge thing, because we didn't have those before," Ron points out. "Noah was probably instrumental in figuring those out. They ended up being super influential, every adventure game after that had dialogues in them. They really allowed players to feel like they were a part of the story because even when they didn't really affect the game you still felt more involved in what you were doing." In terms of oversight from the movie's creative partnership, its director made periodic visits to inspect progress on the graphic adventure adaptation, although these were largely motivated by his passion for gaming. "Spielberg came by the office because he was visiting George for other reasons," Ron mentions. "He was a big gamer; he *loved* games. I remember showing him our game, and he would muscle his way in to grab the mouse."

After *The Last Crusade* adventure game launched in 1989 to much acclaim, a NES adaptation of the third *Indy* movie was released in 1991. The 1992 Lucasfilm original adventure *Indiana Jones And The Fate Of Atlantis* was clearly influenced by the former, and was just as appreciated by gamers. This was especially true of Craig Derrick, who is now Lucasfilm Games' executive producer of the current

» [SNES] Even if you lose all your weapons in *Greatest Adventures* you can still use your fists.

» [SNES] Boss fights are a big part of *Greatest Adventures*, and this battle for the Holy Grail is a tough one.

Stages Of Evolution:

INDY IN VIDEOGAMES 2003–2009

INDIANA JONES AND THE EMPEROR'S TOMB

■ A stylish prequel to *Temple Of Doom* in game form, the *Emperor's Tomb* contains all the third-person platforming, exploration, problem solving and combat that you would expect in a *Tomb Raider* title. There are great setpieces and of course a globe-trotting narrative with a quest for an ancient artefact.

LEGO INDIANA JONES: THE ORIGINAL ADVENTURES

■ Considering *Lego Indiana Jones* involves collecting Lego studs for points and building items from Lego blocks, it's a remarkably accurate if more family friendly adaptation of the first three films. It has a series of sidekicks that you can switch to if needed or let a second player or AI control.

INDIANA JONES AND THE STAFF OF KINGS

■ While similar to the *Emperor's Tomb* in terms of its platforming, adventuring and brawling, the *Staff Of Kings* distinguishes itself with its setpieces. These include climbing a burning rope bridge using *Track & Field*-style controls, a combat flight sim stage and a firefight where you aim using a reticule.

» [SNES] *Temple Of Doom*'s rope bridge finale makes for a memorable level in *Greatest Adventures*.

▶ *Indy* game *The Great Circle*. "I'm an Eighties kid, and I was a huge fan of *Raiders*, *Temple Of Doom* and *The Last Crusade*," Craig beams. "*Fate Of Atlantis* came out in the Nineties when we were all wondering if we were going to get another movie. The developers just nailed the tone, sense of adventure and incredible dialogue. Back then, *Fate Of Atlantis* felt like the movie we never got, because it really captured the spirit of the movies that came before it."

In an evolution of there being up to three ways to solve puzzles in its *Last Crusade* adventure, Lucasfilm developed three ways to play *Fate Of Atlantis*: the Team Path, Wits Path and Fists Path. "I think it was a brilliant design choice," Craig assesses. "We spoke a lot about it during the development of *The Great Circle*. Indiana Jones is a character that can solve problems in different ways. He isn't just a brawler or an academic or an adventurer; he's all those things, and I think it really made the character come together in gameplay for the first time. Giving players that choice at that time in games was really interesting, because it branched the story with different experiences along the way."

> "FATE OF ATLANTIS FELT LIKE THE MOVIE WE NEVER GOT, BECAUSE IT REALLY CAPTURED THE SPIRIT OF THE MOVIES THAT CAME BEFORE IT"
> CRAIG DERRICK

Of the three different ways *Fate Of Atlantis* could be played, its Team Path was perhaps the most unique. It relied on Indy co-operating and getting help from non-player character Sophia Hapgood, a psychic and fellow archaeologist. "Sophia Hapgood was a really great character, and the *Fate Of Atlantis* team really knocked it out of the park with her!" Craig exclaims. "She made the entire story work in a lot of ways, because you needed a good partner and the call to adventure. So Indy goes to New York to find her and then he gets pulled into this adventure. A lot of times that's just the character of Indiana Jones."

In 1992, both *Fate Of Atlantis* and a NES platformer based on the TV spin-off *The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles* hit shop shelves and were well received. Two years later, Factor 5 developed an ambitious SNES adaptation of all three *Indiana Jones* movies called *Indiana Jones' Greatest Adventures*, although this hadn't been the intention of its producer Julian Eggebrecht. "I was hoping to make three games, because I assumed that it should be possible to do *Super Raiders Of The Lost Ark*, *Super Temple Of Doom* and *Super Last Crusade*," Julian recollects. "Instead we had to fit all three movies into one game because LucasArts projected that it would be done by 1994, and by 1995 it was expecting the next generation Nintendo console would be out. Of course people still liked *Greatest Adventures* a lot."

A challenging Mega Drive title called *Instruments Of Chaos Starring Young Indiana Jones* also came out in 1994, and in 1996, a PC/Mac action adventure *Indiana Jones And His Desktop Adventures* followed. In 1999, Julian produced an N64 adaptation of the newly released PC title *Indiana Jones And The Infernal Machine*. Despite a tight deadline, he all but redesigned it for the console. "We wanted to do a completely reinvented N64 version of *Infernal Machine*," Julian reflects, "so we took the cancelled PlayStation version as the basis and ported that to the N64, then we merged it with our *Battle For Naboo* engine. We replaced the PC controls with a new camera and control system inspired by *Ocarina Of Time*, and then we made the weapons lock-on with targeting and all of that, so it was essentially *Ocarina Of Time* with Indiana Jones."

Infernal Machine reviewed well in 2000, as did a 2D Game Boy Color version in 2001. In 2003, the action adventure *Indiana Jones And The Emperor's Tomb* was released, followed by 2008's humorous retelling of the first three movies – *Lego Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures*, which coincided with the fourth film *Indiana Jones And The Kingdom Of The Crystal Skull*. A sequel called *Lego Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues* appeared in 2009, as did the LucasArts action title *Indiana Jones And The Staff Of Kings*. Then in 2011, ▶

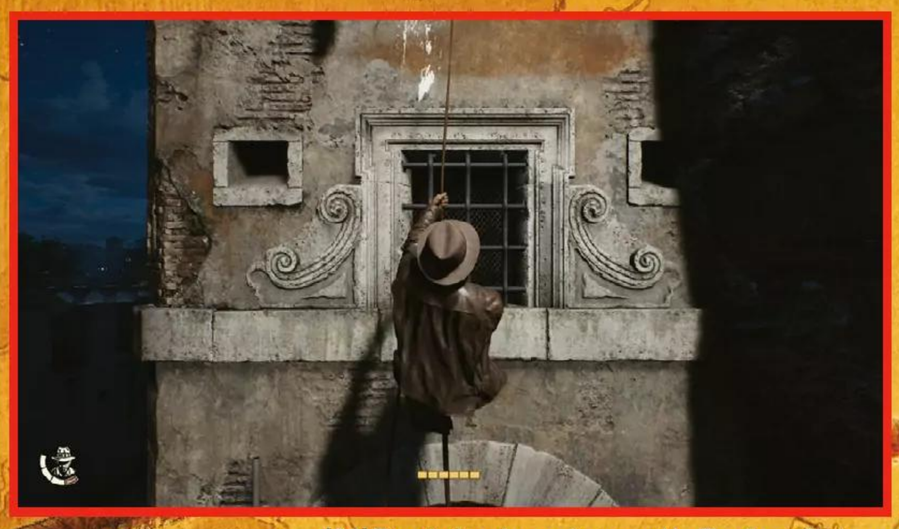
» [Nintendo 64] Indy is known for his stealth, and this quality is essential to success in *Infernal Machine*.

» [Nintendo 64] Underwater mazes are just one of the innovative challenges that *Infernal Machine* sets you.

» [Nintendo 64] *Infernal Machine*, *Fate Of Atlantis* and *Desktop Adventures* were all written and designed by Hal Barwood.

"We wanted the player to step into the shoes of Indiana Jones, and to be up close and personal with different components throughout the game"

Axel Torvenius



» [PC] The platforming and traversal in *The Great Circle* are third-person, which helps give Indy more screen time.

» [PC] The first-person perspective brawling in *The Great Circle* really put Indy's opponents in your face.

Indy: Stay out of the light.

» [PC] Although it's largely played in first-person perspective, *The Great Circle*'s cutscenes are third-person.

the Facebook game *Indiana Jones Adventure World* went live.

In 2023, *Indiana Jones And The Dial Of Destiny* arrived in cinemas, then *Indiana Jones And The Great Circle* appeared on PC and Xbox Series X/S in late-2024. *The Great Circle* channels a much earlier movie, as MachineGames creative director Axel Torvenius explains. "It all started with a conscious decision about which version of Indiana Jones we wanted to portray," Axel considers. "We're fans of all the *Indiana Jones* movies, but we settled on *Raiders Of The Lost Ark* being the prime resource. Obviously there have been great games too, like *Fate Of Atlantis*, so those were relevant. Then when we got closer to working with Lucasfilm Games we gained access to its archive and started digging into the juicy secrets."

Unlike earlier *Indiana Jones* games, *The Great Circle* primarily gives players a first-person perspective view of the action. As well as providing a more immersive *Indiana Jones* experience, this was implemented to make its puzzles feel more intuitive. "We wanted the player to step into the shoes of Indiana Jones, and to be up close and personal with different components throughout the game," Axel remarks. "We have a lot of puzzle-solving and interactions with mysteries, like picking up notes and looking at scrolls. We felt all of those close-to-face interactions were best perceived as part of a first-person experience. If they had been third-person you would need to either zoom in or have a pop-up screen, or whatever. We also have a lot of enemies, and when you're punching them in the face you can get so close you can see the saliva, so first-person gets you really close to the action. Although we also have third-person cutscenes and cinematics, and we move the game into third-person for all traversal and platforming."

As well as its first-person viewpoint, *The Great Circle* also stands out for its epic narrative, which involves a source of great power related to mysterious sites around the world that when viewed on a map form a perfect circle. "MachineGames executive producer Todd Howard had this overarching pitch in terms of the core premise that involved the locations of *The Great Circle*," Axel comments. "Well wouldn't it be cool if those were all connected, but what do they connect to and what's happening? We started figuring out what the big idea behind all of that was. I don't like spoilers, but there is a big cool thing at the end that's the enigma you're trying to solve."

The way that *The Great Circle* seamlessly intertwines challenges requiring Indy's physicality, problem-solving and archaeological expertise is equally worthy of note. Axel describes this feat of development as an exercise in connecting gameplay that would otherwise have been disparate. "How did we balance going from crashing a battleship or whatever to the calm after the storm?" Axel ponders. "Well the set up we worked with pushes the player to go into the adventure aspect as well as platforming, and on the way to find a puzzle maybe they encounter a new enemy. I think that helped to make the big puzzles more of an adventure experience rather than just standing on the spot and figuring them out."

As Craig Derrick prepares for the 2025 release of *The Great Circle* for the PS5, the game's executive producer for Lucasfilm Games considers Indy's importance to the studio over the years and concludes by explaining why great *Indiana Jones* games continue to be made. "Indiana Jones has always been a cornerstone of Lucasfilm and Lucasfilm Games," Craig reviews. "He embodies adventure and mystery and puzzle-solving, and those things make really great games as well as action adventure movies. I think as to why we still make *Indiana Jones* games, well we're all fans. So I think there's absolutely always a place for Indy in gaming, and we were lucky that we had a chance to prove that with *The Great Circle*." ✱

STAGES OF EVOLUTION:

INDY IN VIDEOGAMES 2009–2011

LEGO INDIANA JONES 2: THE ADVENTURE CONTINUES

■ The third *Lego Indy* title, if you count the Java platformer *Mobile Adventure*, *Lego Indiana Jones 2* is packed full of features not found in the original like driving and puzzle-focussed levels. Like the original, it has stages based on the original film trilogy, but it also adapts *The Kingdom Of The Crystal Skull*.

LEGO INDIANA JONES 2: THE ADVENTURE CONTINUES

■ Based purely on *The Kingdom Of The Crystal Skull*, the PSP and DS adaptations of *Lego Indiana Jones 2* primarily favour left/right movement across the screen and adapt some different movie scenes than the PC, Mac and other console versions. Despite this, the portable editions retain the fun of their counterparts.

INDIANA JONES ADVENTURE WORLD

■ Long since shut down, this isometric Facebook game focussed on exploration but had some action elements. You played as a member of a group called The Adventure Society rather than Indiana Jones, but Indy would accompany you. *Adventure World* also had a turn-based combat system and some RPG elements.

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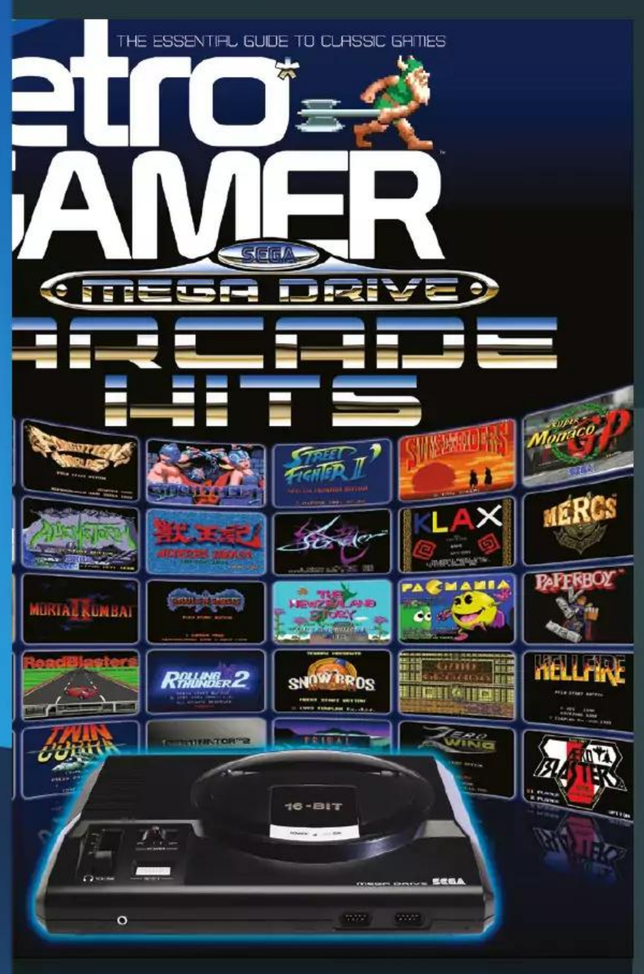

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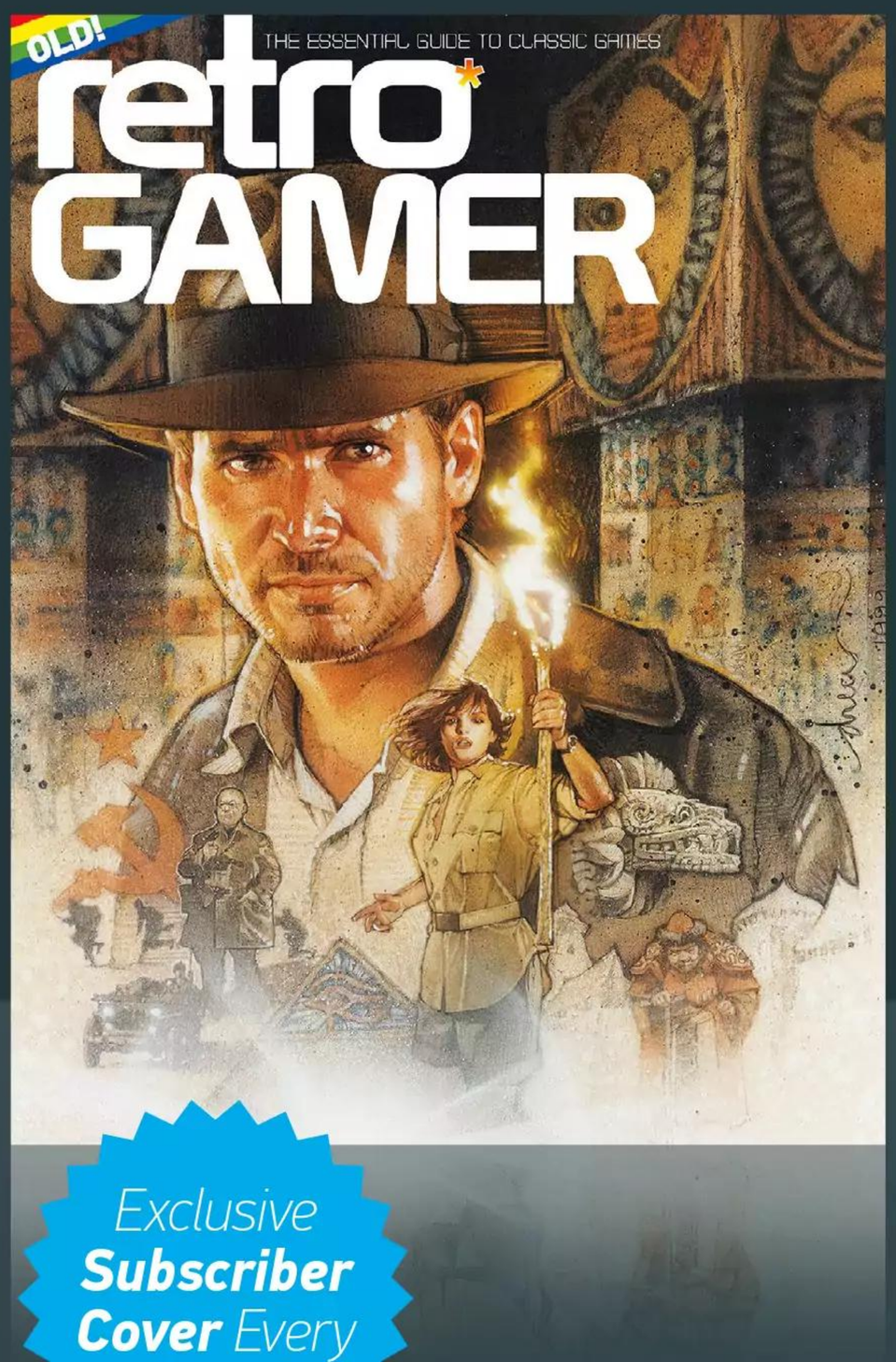

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THE MAKING OF

COMBAT LYNX

IN THE KNOW

- **PUBLISHER:** DURELL SOFTWARE
- **DEVELOPER:** MIKE RICHARDSON
- **PLATFORM:** ZX SPECTRUM, AMSTRAD CPC, COMMODORE 64, BBC MICRO/ ELECTRON
- **RELEASED:** 1984
- **GENRE:** FLIGHT SIM

WHEN CODER MIKE RICHARDSON SWITCHED GENRES AGAIN IN 1984, IT RESULTED IN ONE OF THE ZX SPECTRUM'S FINEST COMBAT SIMULATIONS. RELEASED TO CRITICAL ACCLAIM, COMBAT LYNX HELPED CEMENT DURELL'S REPUTATION AS A QUALITY SOFTWARE HOUSE

WORDS BY GRAEME MASON

By the end of 1983, Somerset-based software house Durell Software had already built itself a solid foundation on the ZX Spectrum: *Scramble* clone and de facto Falkland War shoot-'em-up *Harrier Attack*, platformer *Jungle Trouble* and the beautiful and calming *Scuba Dive* [see Retro Gamer 210]. The latter two were original games from local programmer Mike Richardson, with *Harrier Attack*, his conversion of Ron Jeffs' *Oric* game. As Durell's first employee, Ron had written the shoot-'em-up as Durell sought to expand upon founder Robert White's *Oric* mail-order arcade clones, *Lander* and *Asteroids*. However, it was already becoming clear that Spectrum software was where the sales were. Inspired by the Atari game *Pitfall!*, Mike had programmed *Jungle Trouble* and sent the result to an approving Robert White. Simultaneously, Robert had an idea of his own – *Harrier Attack* – and sales of this shoot-'em-up alone secured Durell's future for several years. Meanwhile, wanting to do something different, Mike pitched the soothing underwater exploration game *Scuba Dive* before the inevitable return to the war theme with which Durell had enjoyed so much success. "Again, it was Robert White's idea," begins Mike. "I think following the success of *Harrier Attack*, he thought it would be good to do another game based on military hardware."

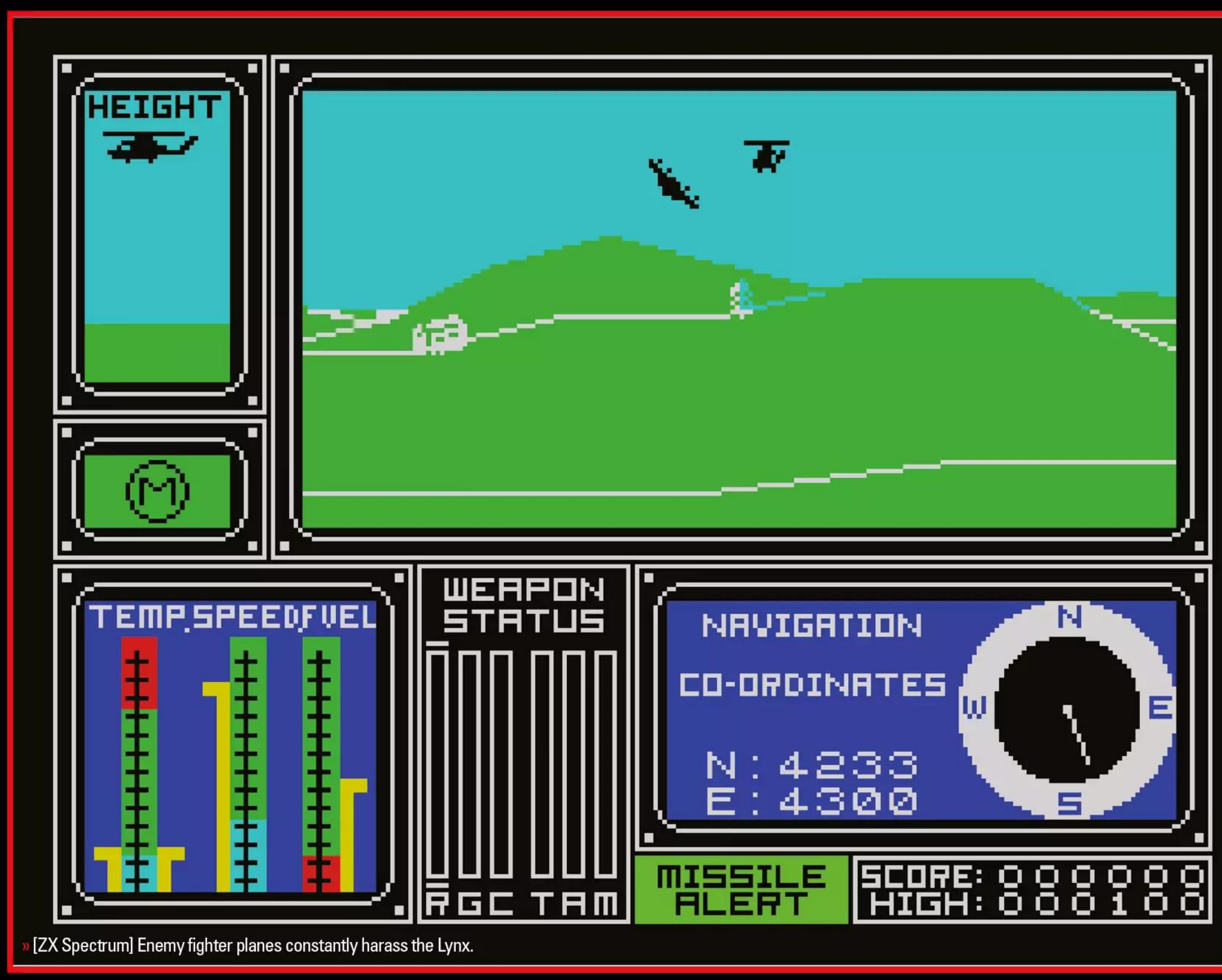
That hardware was a Westland Lynx helicopter. "They were Somerset-based, so local to us," explains Mike. "Robert ran the idea past me and the other members of Durell,

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

HARRIER ATTACK
PLATFORM: ZX SPECTRUM
RELEASED: 1983

TURBO ESPRIT
PLATFORM: ZX SPECTRUM
RELEASED: 1986

THANATOS (PICTURED)
PLATFORM: ZX SPECTRUM, AMSTRAD CPC
RELEASED: 1986



» [ZX Spectrum] Enemy fighter planes constantly harass the Lynx.

Mike Richardson worked at Durell Software and was responsible for some of the studio's biggest games.

Your author (left) alongside Mike Richardson at last November's Crash Live event.

CONVERSION CAPERS

HOW DID COMBAT LYNX STRIKE ON ALL FORMATS?

ZX SPECTRUM

The Lynx helicopter dashes across the screen at a remarkable pace, the rolling hills fairly zipping past. One of the first Spectrum games to portray such an effect, it perhaps balances between strategy, simulation and shooter a little unfairly for fans of the latter – but put the time in and you'll be well rewarded.

AMSTRAD CPC

Converted by Mike himself, the Amstrad game is another technical marvel, with its large play area and smooth 3D landscape impressing the dedicated press of the time. Mike's improvements over the Spectrum original – including a lovely rotating wireframe chopper on the arming screen – make this the best version.

C64

Durell assigned Ron Jeffs to C64 *Combat Lynx*, reversing its *Harrier Attack* working order. Sadly, Durell's poor record on the C64 continues here, and while we could perhaps excuse its crude graphics, the sluggish gameplay makes the arcade action too much of a chore to be any fun.

BBC MICRO/ ACORN ELECTRON

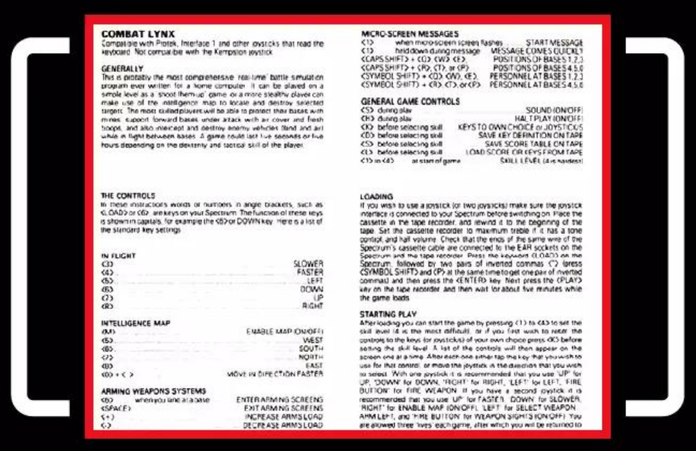
While certainly garish visually, the work of developers Julian Todd and Nick Wilson is well represented here, with a fluid chopper gliding efficiently across the landscape. Despite lacking some elements, this version still has enough to be one of the better arcade simulations on the Beeb and Electron.

BECOME A WOLF OF THE AIR

COMBAT LYNX IS A CHALLENGING GAME – HERE'S RETRO GAMER'S GUIDE TO SURVIVING ITS HAZARDOUS WORLD

MISSILE COMMAND

■ Enemy missiles harass the player's copter, and dodging them is not easy, especially when your attention is on another combatant. Swerving and tilting from side to side is the most effective way of avoiding these airborne threats.



THE MASTER OF KEYS

■ Like many flight sims, *Combat Lynx* utilises a huge amount of keys – 25 – and you'll need many of them during the heat of battle. Memorising the most important and practising how the Lynx moves at high speeds is critical.

KEEP AN EYE ON THE A-Z

■ Learning to interpret the symbols of *Combat Lynx*'s map is crucial. White and green squares represent the low and high ground, respectively, while T means Tank, a side-on H means lorry and an upside-down Y is a gun emplacement. Got a circle around them? Check your fire – that's a friendly.

THE ACE OF BASE

■ While the Lynx will have three to six bases to land at and protect (depending on the selected difficulty level), Base Zero is by far the most important. Here, the player can infinitely refuel and rearm, and it can also revitalise injured troops from other bases. Protect it with your life.

ENEMY MINE

■ Ensuring your chopper has a plentiful supply of mines is vital during loadout. Mines protect your forward bases, and as you can't be everywhere at once – there only appears to be one helicopter in this airforce – you'll need to stall the enemy ground troops until you can get there.

LYNX AT BASE 0
ROCKET INSTALLATION 0000 kg
AMMUNITION(00 MISSILES) 0000 kg
OTHER ACCESSORIES 0000 kg
FUEL (MAX. 768) 0768 kg
TOTAL (MAX.2145) 0768 kg

LOADOUT MANAGEMENT

■ While ostensibly a battle simulation, *Combat Lynx* also requires careful strategic management from the player. Assigning your loadout is key here: tooling your chopper up to the max will highly reduce the fuel it can carry, necessitating a somewhat more balanced approach.

▶ such as Ron Jeffs, who did the Commodore 64 version." To help his programmers devise their games, Robert took the Durell staff on a day trip to Westland's headquarters in Yeovil, as Mike recalls. "They seemed quite keen on the idea of a computer game based on the helicopter and gave us some promotional material, along with a Westland tie. I've never worn it – it's still in its wrapper!"

Having specialised in fixed-wing aircraft during World War I and II (including the Spitfire following the bombing of Supermarine's main factory in Southampton), Westland Aircraft pivoted to rotary-wing in peacetime, acquiring its competitors under a new name, Westland Helicopters. Then, in the mid-Sixties, the company began developing the Lynx, a highly manoeuvrable helicopter capable of sea and land-based operations. By the late-Seventies, Westland had developed a military model, specialising in supporting ground troops and fitted with anti-tank capabilities. However, by the mid-Eighties, times were changing for the UK's sole helicopter manufacturer. When Durell visited its offices in 1984, plans were already underway to form a commercial partnership with Sikorsky, an American company founded by Russian immigrant Igor Sikorsky in 1923. The deal incited a crisis dubbed the Westland Affair as the UK's secretary of state for defence, Michael Heseltine, clashed with prime minister Margaret Thatcher. Thatcher wanted to build on the UK's relationship with the US; Heseltine with Europe. After much political collusion, the Sikorsky deal continued.

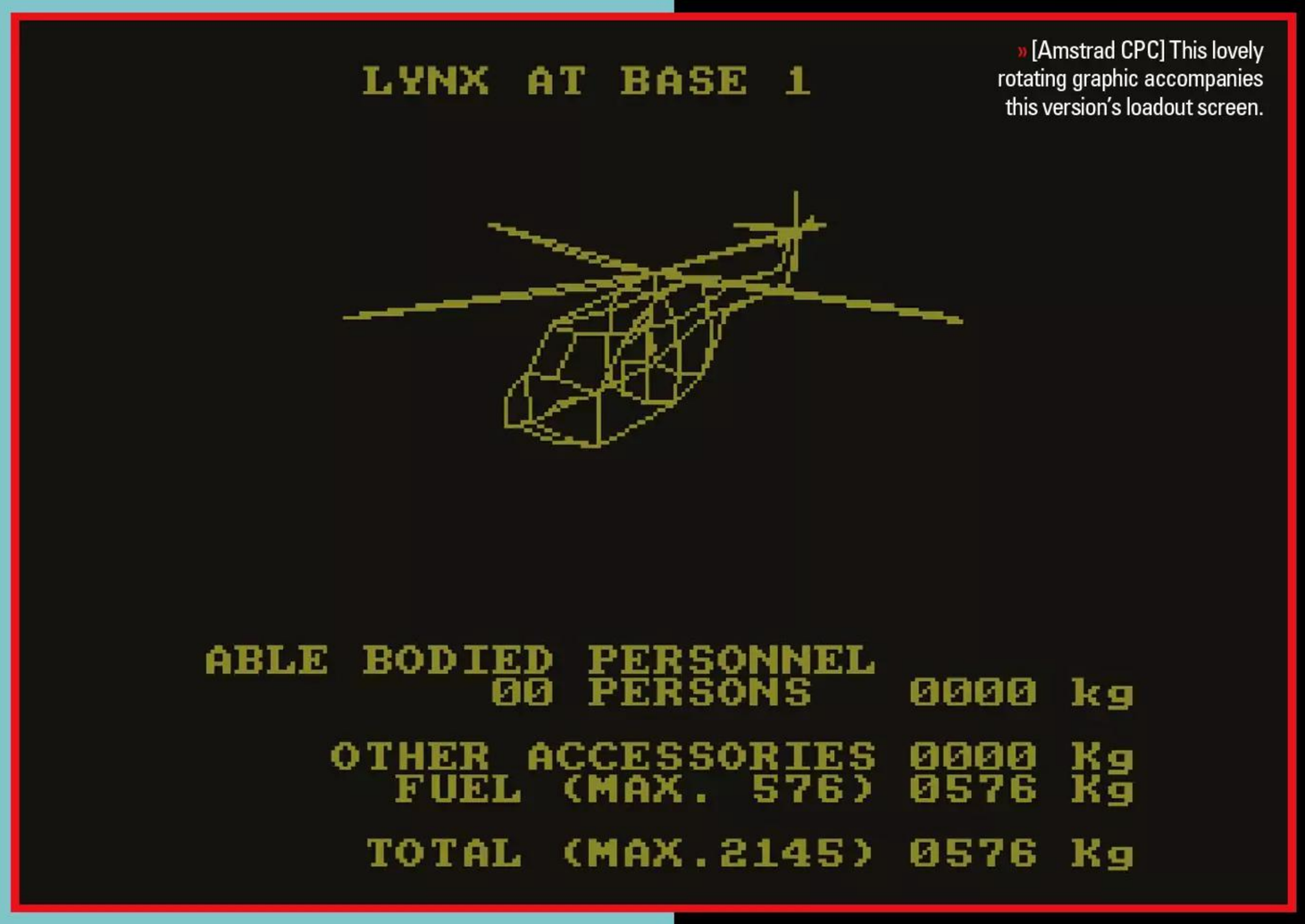
Back at Durell, Mike had so far developed his games on a Spectrum using Crystal Computing's Zeus Assembler. "Creating a 48K game in this way – as I did for *Scuba Dive* – was extremely time-consuming and frustrating," he notes. "Left to my own devices, I probably would have just carried on in that way, I was so blinkered." Fortunately, a forward-thinking Robert White had other ideas. "Robert arranged for me to meet a sales guy. I bought an Epson CP/M machine, the QX-10.

» [BBC Micro] The excellent BBC port by Julian Todd and Nick Wilson.

» [ZX Spectrum] As lovely as *Combat Lynx*'s rolling hills are, they are best avoided.

£100 REWARD
If your copy of this game does not have a blue plastic cassette body with the word 'DURELL' embossed on it in a small depression at the back of the cassette body then it is a forgery. Please send suspected forgeries to:-
Durell Software Ltd.,
Castle Lodge,
Castle Green,
Taunton, Somerset.
TA21 4AB
with your name, your address, and the name and address of the person who supplied you with the forgery. You will be sent a genuine replacement copy and a reward of £100 if your information leads to a successful prosecution.
PRESS ANY KEY TO CONTINUE.

» [ZX Spectrum] Durell's standard blue screen of death [to pirates].


LYNX AT BASE 1
ABLE BODIED PERSONNEL
00 PERSONS 0000 kg
OTHER ACCESSORIES 0000 Kg
FUEL (MAX. 576) 0576 Kg
TOTAL (MAX.2145) 0576 Kg

» [Amstrad CPC] This lovely rotating graphic accompanies this version's loadout screen.

It cost me almost two grand, which seemed like an absolute fortune at the time!" With its Z80 processor, 256K of RAM and two 5-inch floppy disk drives, the QX-10 was perfect for Spectrum development, but that doesn't mean it worked right out of the box. "I had to solder a cable together and use the Epson's printer port to connect it to a Spectrum before coding a little downloader," recounts Mike. "Then, on the Spectrum, I had a short piece of interface code which was loaded in from Microdrive." The Microsoft MASM Z80 Assembler completed the set up.

The Spectrum benchmark for flight simulations was 1983's *Fighter Pilot*, written by ex-RAE engineer David Marshall. While the Digital Integration game incorporated a fair amount of realism, it was visually plain, presenting an artificial horizon, enemy planes and little else. *Combat Lynx*, with its contoured rolling landscape would be something quite different. "I wasn't particularly aware of what was going on around me in terms of game development – but it did feel like it was something fresh," says Mike. Also new was Mike's plan to have the player's vehicle on-screen. More on that shortly – it's time for an overdue look at *Combat Lynx*, the game.

In *Combat Lynx*, the player is at the yoke of an advanced Westland Lynx helicopter. The game takes place within one arena of battle containing up to six bases, depending on the selected skill level. Your mission is to protect the bases from the enemy's advance, consisting of troops, tanks and supply trucks. Each base begins the game with 30 soldiers; soldiers are killed or injured as the conflict ensues.

One of the Lynx's primary tasks is to ferry the wounded back to Base Zero, where the army medics can patch them up. Enemies can be taken out directly by the Lynx, but you can only be in one place at a time. Fortunately, mines are available, and placing these strategically around each base will help turn the tide of battle in your favour. Before taking off, the player selects their loadout, the total of which is governed by the weight limit of the Lynx.

Balancing manpower, air-to-air and air-to-ground missiles, mines and more is critical to the mission's success. "It's the enemy tanks that do the damage," says Mike, "so it's quite important to stop them. Laying a ring of mines around your bases is the easiest and most passive way to eliminate tanks." Enemy planes, while a threat to the Lynx, don't trouble the bases but can be destroyed for bonus points. After eliminating a certain amount of enemy tanks, the brave pilot can relax for a few days before the next dangerous mission.

Following the Westland visit, Mike began developing his game around the military iteration of the Lynx, taking its ground support strength as a basis for the game. "At the time, I was completing my master's degree at Bristol Polytechnic," he says. "The *Combat Lynx* project came up at the same time I first saw the output from a Scanning Electron Microscope at Bristol." First conceived in the Forties, the SEM uses a focussed ▶

> "I THINK MORE GUIDANCE FOR THE PLAYER WOULD HAVE BEEN USEFUL"
> **MIKE RICHARDSON**

LOADING SCREEN ACTION

Mike implemented a little treat for the Spectrum owners of *Combat Lynx* – a loading screen that sprung to life once the game was ready. "It was something I'd done before with *Harrier Attack*," he remembers. "For *Combat Lynx*, I had quite a large area of memory for use as a graphics buffer during gameplay, so it was a helpful space to put some one-off graphics and code." Upon completion of loading, the *Combat Lynx* springs to life, rotors twirling as it hurls rockets at a nearby tank. "Loading a game from tape always seemed like quite a chore – so it was a little reward for the player's patience," smiles Mike.

SIM OR SHOOT?

COMBAT LYNX BLURS THE LINE BETWEEN SHOOT-'EM-UP AND SIMULATION – HOW DO THESE OTHER CHOPPER GAMES LINE UP?

BLUE THUNDER

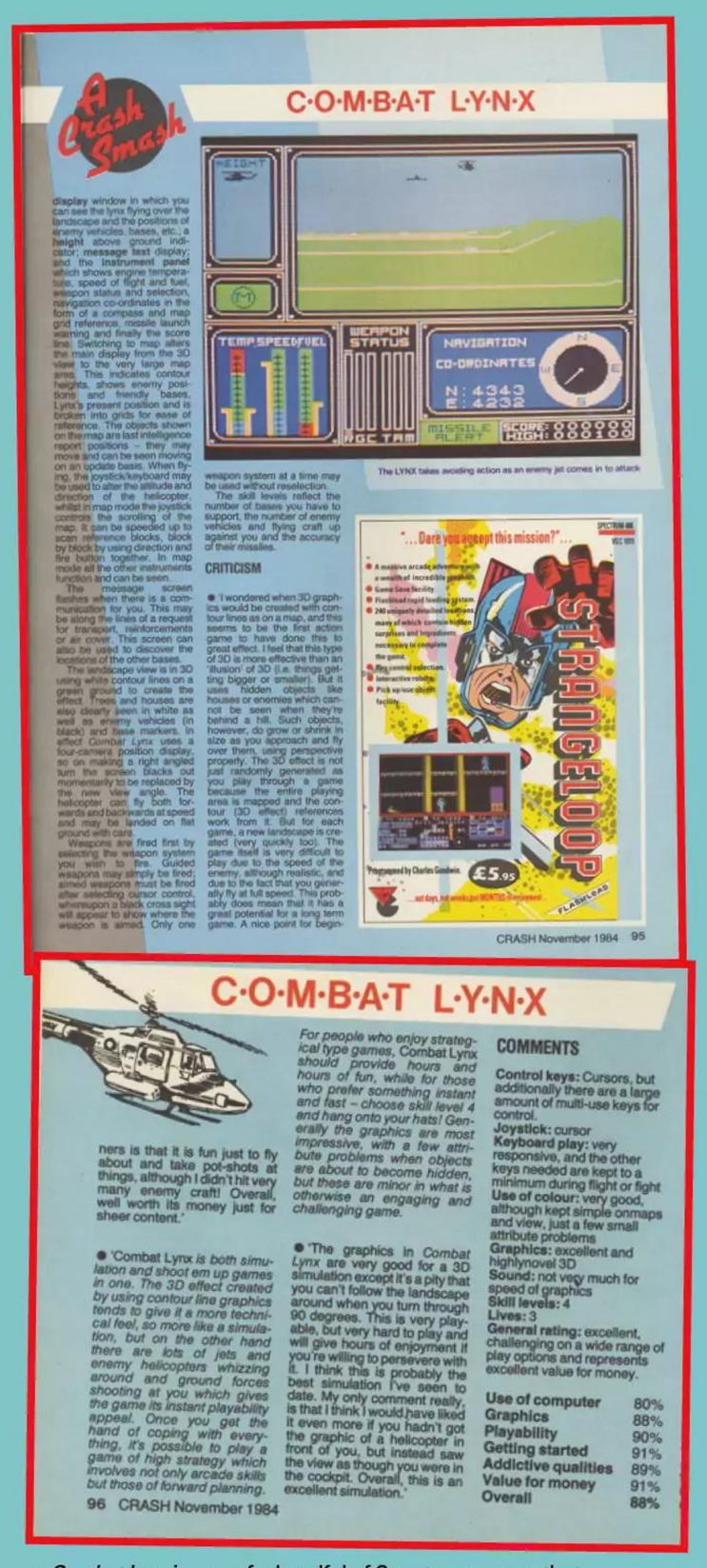
■ Cheekily swiping the name of the movie and TV series, this game from a pre-Elite Richard Wilcox features a jetcopter nicknamed, you guessed it, Blue Thunder. Your perilous-sounding mission is to destroy an enemy nuclear reactor with jet fighters, gun emplacements and more standing in your way.

GUNSHIP

■ MicroProse began publishing its own Spectrum software in 1987, and this helicopter game appeared in a large box containing a cassette, 85-page manual, keyboard guide and more. Over several missions, the player pilots the AH-64A Apache, taking on enemies with Hellfire missiles and 2.75-inch air-to-ground rockets.

TOMAHAWK

■ The masters of the simulation, Digital Integration, liked to put out the occasional arcade-style game (*Night Gunner*, *ATF*), but which was this? Created by Dave '*Fighter Pilot*' Marshall, the player takes control of a well-armed AH-64A Apache over four increasingly risky missions.


A Crash Smash
C·O·M·B·A·T L·Y·N·X
display window in which you can see the lynx flying over the landscape and the positions of enemy vehicles, bases, etc.; a height above ground indicator; message text display; and the instrument panel which shows engine temperature, speed of flight and fuel, weapon status and selection, navigation co-ordinates in the form of a compass and map grid reference, missile launch warning and finally the score line. Switching to map alters the main display from the 3D view to the very large map area. This indicates contour heights, shows enemy positions and friendly bases, Lynx's present position and is broken into grids for ease of reference. The objects shown on the map are last intelligence report positions – they may move and can be seen moving on an update basis. When flying, the joystick/keyboard may be used to alter the attitude and direction of the helicopter, whilst in map mode the joystick controls the scrolling of the map. It can be speeded up to scan reference blocks, block by block by using direction and fire button together. In map mode all the other instruments function and can be seen.
The message screen flashes when there is a communication for you. This may be along the lines of a request for transport, reinforcements or air cover. This screen can also be used to discover the locations of the other bases.
The landscape view is in 3D using white contour lines on a green ground to create the effect. Trees and houses are also clearly seen in white as well as enemy vehicles (in black) and base markers. In effect Combat Lynx uses a four-camera position display, so on making a right angled turn the screen blacks out momentarily to be replaced by the new view angle. The helicopter can fly both forwards and backwards at speed and may be landed on flat ground with care.
Weapons are fired first by selecting the weapon system you wish to fire. Guided weapons may simply be fired; aimed weapons must be fired after selecting cursor control, whereupon a black cross sight will appear to show where the weapon is aimed. Only one weapon system at a time may be used without reselection.
The skill levels reflect the number of bases you have to support, the number of enemy vehicles and flying craft up against you and the accuracy of their missiles.
CRITICISM
● 'I wondered when 3D graphics would be created with contour lines as on a map, and this seems to be the first action game to have done this to great effect. I feel that this type of 3D is more effective than an 'illusion' of 3D (i.e. things getting bigger or smaller). But it uses hidden objects like houses or enemies which cannot be seen when they're behind a hill. Such objects, however, do grow or shrink in size as you approach and fly over them, using perspective properly. The 3D effect is not just randomly generated as you play through a game because the entire playing area is mapped and the contour (3D effect) references work from it. But for each game, a new landscape is created (very quickly too). The game itself is very difficult to play due to the speed of the enemy, although realistic, and due to the fact that you generally fly at full speed. This probably does mean that it has a great potential for a long term game. A nice point for beginners is that it is fun just to fly about and take pot-shots at things, although I didn't hit very many enemy craft! Overall, well worth its money just for sheer content.'
● 'Combat Lynx is both simulation and shoot em up games in one. The 3D effect created by using contour line graphics tends to give it a more technical feel, so more like a simulation, but on the other hand there are lots of jets and enemy helicopters whizzing around and ground forces shooting at you which gives the game its instant playability appeal. Once you get the hand of coping with everything, it's possible to play a game of high strategy which involves not only arcade skills but those of forward planning.
For people who enjoy strategical type games, Combat Lynx should provide hours and hours of fun, while for those who prefer something instant and fast – choose skill level 4 and hang onto your hats! Generally the graphics are most impressive, with a few attribute problems when objects are about to become hidden, but these are minor in what is otherwise an engaging and challenging game.
● 'The graphics in Combat Lynx are very good for a 3D simulation except it's a pity that you can't follow the landscape around when you turn through 90 degrees. This is very playable, but very hard to play and will give hours of enjoyment if you're willing to persevere with it. I think this is probably the best simulation I've seen to date. My only comment really, is that I think I would have liked it even more if you hadn't got the graphic of a helicopter in front of you, but instead saw the view as though you were in the cockpit. Overall, this is an excellent simulation.'
COMMENTS
Control keys: Cursors, but additionally there are a large amount of multi-use keys for control.
Joystick: cursor
Keyboard play: very responsive, and the other keys needed are kept to a minimum during flight or fight
Use of colour: very good, although kept simple onmaps and view, just a few small attribute problems
Graphics: excellent and highlynovel 3D
Sound: not very much for speed of graphics
Skill levels: 4
Lives: 3
General rating: excellent, challenging on a wide range of play options and represents excellent value for money.
Use of computer 80%
Graphics 88%
Playability 90%
Getting started 91%
Addictive qualities 89%
Value for money 91%
Overall 88%
96 CRASH November 1984
C·O·M·B·A·T L·Y·N·X
The LYNX takes avoiding action as an enemy jet comes in to attack
"...Dare you accept this mission?"...
STRANGELOOP
£5.95
CRASH November 1984 95

» *Combat Lynx* is one of a handful of Spectrum games that received a Crash Smash despite not quite making 90%.

beam of electrons to reveal the fine surface and structural detail of an object. "The microscope image had parallel contour lines indicating the scanned surface," continues Mike. "It was a small step for me to realise that this could actually be a good way to represent a 3D landscape for *Combat Lynx*."

> "I THINK THAT SEEING THE COPTER GIVES YOU A BETTER IDEA OF HOW HIGH YOU ARE AND WHEN YOU ARE CARRYING MINES"
> **MIKE RICHARDSON**

Already familiar with Bresenham's line-drawing algorithm thanks to the book *Complete Spectrum ROM Disassembly* by Drs Ian Logan and Frank O'Hara, Mike created a 2D square grid height map covering the whole gameplay area and a table of grid point widths and sea level positions to map the grid points to the screen. "I didn't know how 3D projection worked mathematically at this point, so I just guessed at these table values," he recalls. To obscure the lines in the distance, Mike drew the game's lines from foreground to background, maintaining a height of the current horizon for each pixel across the screen and not drawing pixels below the horizon height. "Finally, when all the lines were drawn, I could use this horizon table to fill the region between earth and sky to avoid colour clash," Mike says.

Combat Lynx's action occurs on this randomly generated map and base positions. "It starts with an empty height map, a few small fixed size height maps of little hills are randomly added," explains Mike. "Of course, sometimes these would overlap, giving rise to higher and more interesting terrain." Mike painstakingly tested a single point on each object (tank, base and so on) to ascertain whether it was below the horizon when the game's contour lines were drawn. "From this point, [the game] would deem the whole object obscured," says Mike.

"Luckily – or by design! – all the objects are small, so it's not too distracting when the whole object disappears." Interestingly, one of those small objects is the player's Lynx itself. "The method I was using to draw the landscape relied on a fixed camera," notes Mike, "and I didn't have the technical know-how at that time to do it any other way. It only pointed forwards along a compass point and couldn't look up or down, which wouldn't have worked if the camera was on the helicopter." Arguably, even if Mike had known the necessary techniques, the Spectrum's Z80 processor might have struggled to perform so many 3D calculations on the fly. "Also, I think that seeing the copter gives you a better idea of how high you are and when you are carrying mines," adds Mike.

Combat Lynx's gameplay treads a fine line between flight sim and shoot-'em-up. "I was concerned that it was too difficult to play and boring," admits Mike. Unlike peers such as *Fighter Pilot*, the Durell coder made little effort to mimic the controls and behaviour of a real Lynx helicopter. "I did, however, try to include all of the weapon systems that a real Lynx could carry and copy how they worked." Managing these loadouts, including the vital mines, became an essential part of *Combat Lynx*, as well as expert marksmanship and flying prowess. It was a lot for the player to juggle. "I think more guidance for the player would have been useful," Mike confesses. "As

AIRWOLF

Otherwise known as *Fucking Airwolf*. Attractive and colourful, the game certainly looked the part, and Elite had a winner commercially once it swiped the official licence away from rival Ocean. Few Spectrum games, however, remain as challenging as this, it's a frustrating exercise from the second screen.

THUNDER BLADE

US Gold's big licence of winter 1988 was this home port of the arcade game. Piloting the helicopter, the player ventures across four diverse areas, each laden with enemy choppers, tanks and aircraft. Presented in two alternating views, above or behind, it sadly didn't include the sit-on pretend chopper from the coin-op.

CYCLONE

Thanks to his *Android* games and *Tornado Low Level*, programmer Costa Panayi had already nailed down a particular graphical aesthetic by 1984. This time, you're at the yoke of a transport chopper, recovering essential medical supplies from nearby islands while avoiding the eponymous tropical storm.

» [ZX Spectrum] *Combat Lynx*'s hills are another threat.

» [ZX Spectrum] Mike's contour lines help give a fine sense of speed.

» Mike taps away on a Speccy in the attic of Durell's Castle Lodge offices.

COMBAT LYNX
From DURELL
(Technical Support from Westland Helicopters)
Available now from most retail outlets
COMMODORE 64 – SPECTRUM 48k
Available soon
ORIC – BBC – AMSTRAD
DURELL sales dept., Castle Lodge, Castle Green, Taunton, Somerset, TA1 4AB

» The *Combat Lynx* double-page advert was quite striking.

the programmer, I knew how it worked, so it was obvious to play, and I found it hard to see the game from someone else's perspective." Is there anything else Mike wishes he'd done differently? "I never liked the small message window – it took a long time for messages to display, making them difficult to read while paying attention to other game aspects. It would have been useful to have a message board that could be switched to, like the map."

In the summer of 1984, Robert White took the finished game back to Westland Helicopters. "They were very impressed," recalls Mike, "and Robert relayed that they'd commented on how we'd managed to get such a realistic simulation. I seem to recall they had a cabinet built to permanently house a Spectrum loaded with the game so that staff could play it in the canteen."

Meanwhile, with the Spectrum game done, Mike moved to the Amstrad port. Using a book of Robert White's about the math of 3D transformations – the Durell boss worked as a CAD specialist for the Oxford Regional Health Authority before entering the games software industry – Mike created the lovely rotating wireframe Lynx that adorns the Amstrad's loadout page. Fellow Durell programmer Nick Wilson (who worked on the commendable BBC Micro version alongside Julian Todd) also had a little trick for Mike. "The Amstrad screen had a four-colour mode. Nick suggested rendering two frames of black-and-white animation to the screen and switching frames by changing the colours. This halved the time needed to clear the screen since it only had to be done every other frame."

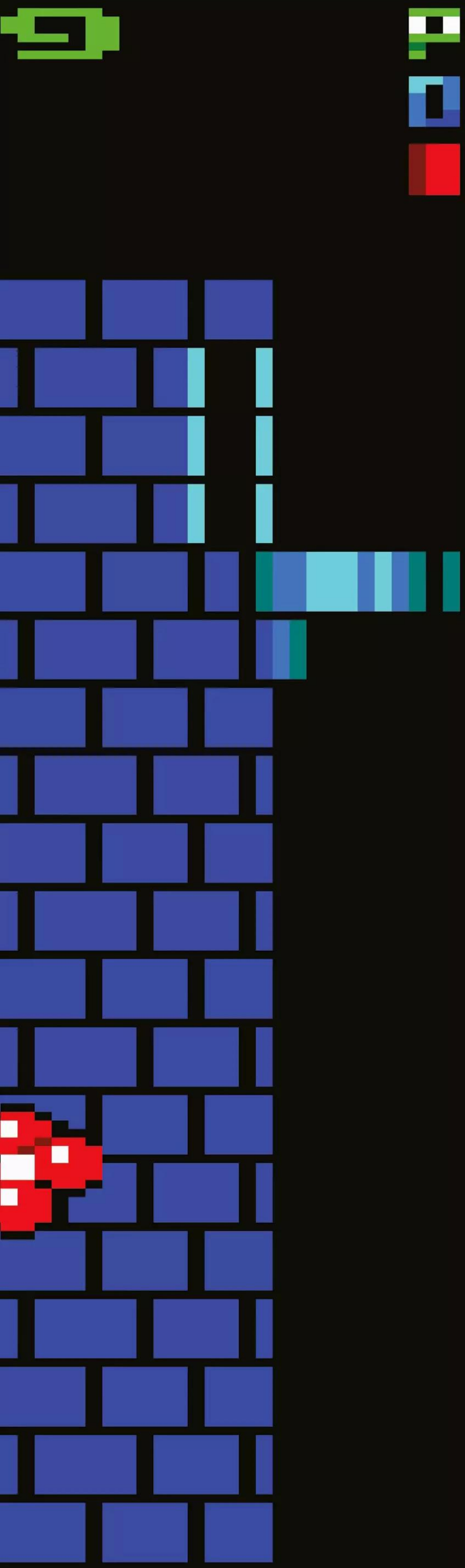
Today, despite the generally glowing reviews of the time, Mike looks back at *Combat Lynx* with mixed feelings. "It's difficult to play, too boring and requires too much investment from the player. I do like the rolling hills, though, and I am quite proud of that effect." Even more important is the legacy of Mike's fourth game for Durell. "I learned a great deal from [*Combat Lynx*]," he smiles. "To repeat myself, I think it's difficult to play and boring – but it was a very useful technical exercise. It set me up very nicely to write my next game: *Turbo Esprit*." ✱

Our thanks to Mike for his time.

» [ZX Spectrum] Ready for take-off from Base Zero.

PLAYER 1 - 035

00000960



PLAYER 2

Nebulus

WHAT GOES UP MUST COME DOWN

RETROREVIVAL

» AMSTRAD CPC » 1988 » CHRIS WOODS

Ideas for videogames can come from all sorts of places. As a developer, you might be inspired by a film you've seen, someone else's game, or even a slice of pizza. Game ideas can also spawn from creating something technically impressive and then building a game around it, which brings us to *Nebulus*.

Regardless of whether you know it as *Nebulus*, *Castelian*, *Kyorochan Land* or *Tower Toppler*, there's no denying that John M Phillips' game is a technically outstanding one. Starting off life as a shooter with John having his ship flying across horizontal cylinders, *Nebulus* continued to evolve as it moved from the Spectrum to its eventual lead platform, the C64.

While John didn't fully code the Amstrad CPC version of the game (it was converted by Chris Woods with John helping out) *Nebulus* lost little in the transition to Lord Sugar's micro and it remains an impressive-looking game and a genuinely challenging one to boot.

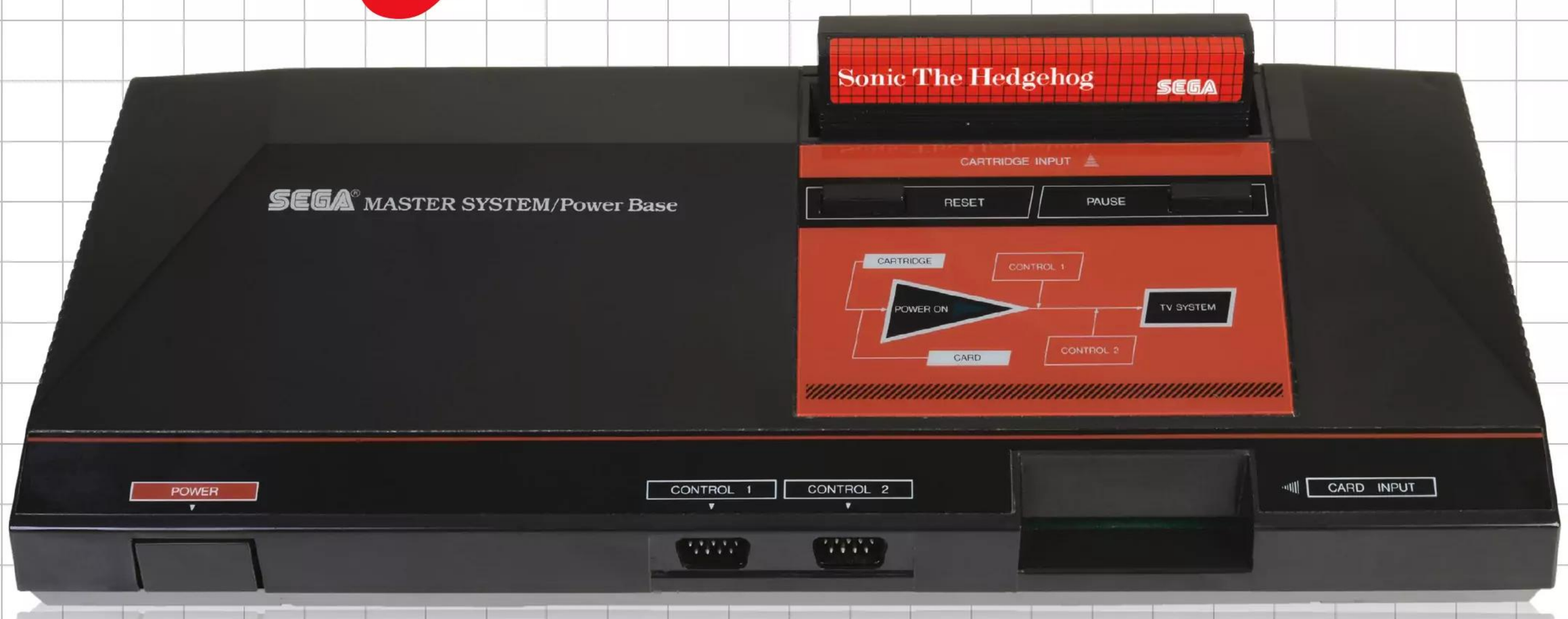
If you've never played it before, Nebulus tasks you with reaching the top of a revolving tower so that you can place a bomb at its zenith and send the structure toppling into the water below. It's unclear why the bomb is more effective at the top of the tower, rather than its base, but as there wouldn't be a game without it we'll let it slide.

Each of the eight towers you must topple is filled with hazards, from collapsible platforms to patrolling enemies – make contact with an enemy and you'll fall several feet, which costs you precious time (or a life if you fall into the water). An additional issue is a patrolling red drone that appears at numerous points and can be a nightmare to dodge – luckily a warning will sound ahead of its arrival.

Nebulus blew me away when I first encountered it, largely because it was so technically impressive to look at. It's not quite on the same level mechanically, but sometimes a splendidly implemented technical trick is all that's needed to get you interested and then solid game design will do the rest. ✱

THE RETRO GAMER GUIDE TO

Master System

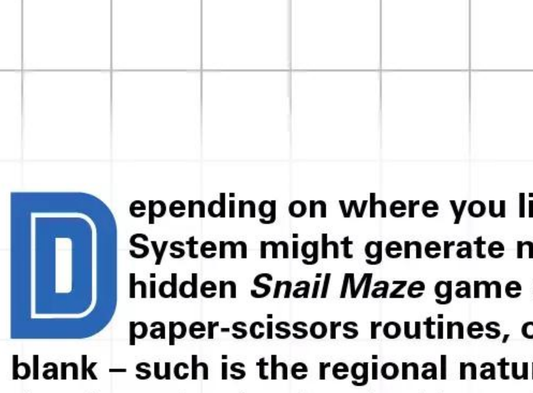


THE MASTER SYSTEM WAS A PIVOTAL CONSOLE FOR SEGA, TRANSLATING ITS ARCADE PROWESS INTO A FOOTHOLD IN THE HOMES OF PLAYERS. THE MACHINE WAS HOME TO PLENTY OF GREAT GAMES OVER THE YEARS – HOW MANY OF THESE HAVE YOU PLAYED?

WORDS BY NICK THORPE

Depending on where you live, a mention of the Sega Master System might generate nostalgic gushing about the hidden *Snail Maze* game and having to memorise rock-paper-scissors routines, or it might just draw a confused blank – such is the regional nature of the machine's fortunes. Still, there's no denying that the Master System was a beefy little machine when it first hit the market, and in many cases it was the best way to experience the best of the arcades at home. Over time, the console's fortunes faded in NTSC regions, but a thriving audience in Europe and Brazil kept the machine going well into the mid-Nineties, serving as a wallet-friendly alternative to the Mega Drive.

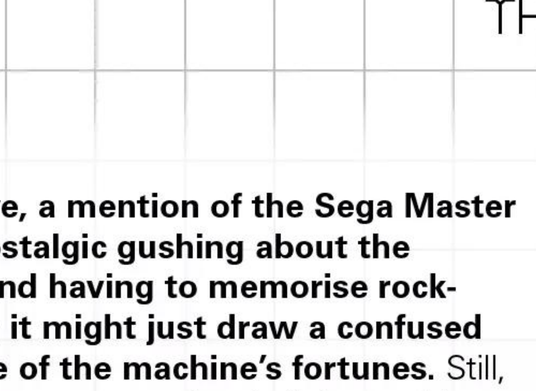
With hundreds of games officially released during the console's lifetime, it's impossible to cover every single game worth playing. However, we've pulled out a good selection from arcade conversions and groundbreaking original games to the surprisingly good Mega Drive ports that arrived late in the life of the console. There are even some releases that were exclusive to the Japanese market, where the console was better known as the Sega Mark III. So enjoy the dozens of games you'll see over the next few pages, keep a checklist to count how many you've played, and we're sure we don't need to remind you to send in letters telling us which games we *should* have included. We'll eagerly await them – in the meantime, enjoy these 8-bit hits… ✱



FANTASY ZONE 1986

SEGA R&D 2

■ Don't be fooled by the colourful appearance of this classic cute-'em-up – it has wraparound horizontal stages like *Defender*, and likewise it's definitely no pushover. It was also the first Japanese Mark III game to use a cartridge rather than the card format, and it was well worth the upgrade. It's a strong conversion of the arcade original, full of colour and recognisable tunes.



CHOPLIFTER 1986

SEGA R&D 2

■ Your comrades are stuck behind enemy lines, so it's up to you and your chopper to fly in, blast open their prisons and get them home to safety. This is based on Sega's arcade version rather than Dan Gorlin's original game, so you have to meet a rescue quota instead of ensuring the whole area is clear, and the graphics are very good for the era with excellent parallax scrolling.

SECRET COMMAND 1986

SEGA R&D 2

■ If this run-and-gunner were any more open about its inspiration, it might accidentally say 'Secret Commando' on its title screen. Oh wait, it does. Still, Capcom's classic is hardly a bad game to pay homage to, and it's one of the best co-op games of the console's early years. The North American release bears the movie-licensed title *Rambo: First Blood Part II* instead.

WONDER BOY 1987

SEGA

■ One of Sega's strengths as a console manufacturer was always its ability to bring home arcade favourites, and this conversion of *Wonder Boy* is an excellent example of that. The visuals, audio and gameplay are faithful, and it even includes extra levels and a more forgiving difficulty curve.

ALEX KIDD IN MIRACLE WORLD 1986

SEGA R&D 2

■ The monkey-like mascot of Sega's Master System years puts in a strong first showing here – with plenty of different types of stages to navigate, plus a shop system, vehicles and more, *Alex Kidd*'s debut is one of the most varied platformers of the mid-Eighties. Oddball design choices like rock-paper-scissors bosses give it a distinctive character, and the decision to build it into the hardware has ensured its enduring popularity.

ZILLION 1987

SEGA R&D 2

■ Though Tatsunoko Production created the original *Zillion* anime series, Sega certainly got its share of influence – Opa-Opa shows up in it and Sega sold laser-tag toys fashioned after the Light Phaser-esque Zillion gun. If you're familiar with *Impossible Mission*, you'll be right at home with this tie-in game as it's exceptionally similar. The main differences are that you have proper combat capabilities here, and you can collect upgrades and unlock two comrades with different abilities to help you progress. ▶

PENGUIN LAND 1987

SEGA R&D 2

The original *Doki Doki Penguin Land* was arguably the SG-1000's best game, and this sequel is even better. As the penguin Overbite, your job is to safely lower a fragile egg to the bottom of each stage, avoiding hazards such as major falls, polar bears and malicious birds. There are 50 fiendish platform puzzle stages to beat, and you can create and save up to 15 of your own on the cartridge too.

GHOSTBUSTERS 1987

COMPILE

This is based on David Crane's classic computer game, and has you building a Ghostbusters franchise and tackling paranormal outbreaks across the city of New York. It goes beyond the original design though – as well as having improved graphics, the driving sections are more involved and there's an additional final boss confrontation with Gozer, making this arguably the best version of the game.

PHANTASY STAR 1987

SEGA R&D 2

Here's a truly brilliant RPG that has it all. It's got a story that blends science fiction and fantasy elements, following a young woman's quest for revenge against a tyrannical king across three distinct planets. Tokuhiko Uwabo's soundtrack is a treat for the ears, and the game's detailed battle scenes and 3D dungeons are a feast for the eyes. It was and is pricey, but it's one of the console's deepest experiences.

POWER STRIKE 1988

COMPILE

This is actually the first game in Compile's *Aleste* series, and it's a fast, frantic vertical shoot-'em-up befitting that heritage. For some reason, Sega decided to give this one a limited mail-order release via the Sega Challenge newsletter in North America. Its 1993 sequel is equally good, but considerably more expensive.

ENDURO RACER 1987

SEGA ENTERPRISES

Rather than trying to directly adapt the arcade original, Sega chose to repurpose the name for this isometric off-road motorbike racer, which tasks you with getting through hazardous terrain including mountain passes and deserts. Unfortunately, the international release used a smaller ROM than the Japanese version, so half the levels were removed.

SHINOBI 1988

SEGA R&D 2

This classic ninja action game includes just about everything players loved about the arcade game, from familiar stages and bosses to that exciting bonus stage, so the battle against the evil Ring Of Five group remains thrilling. However, Sega made a number of changes to the Master System conversion to make it more suited to home-console play – Joe Musashi has a life bar for a more forgiving experience, and rescuing kidnapped kids grants special upgrades, including both additional melee and projectile weapons.

KENSEIDEN 1988

SEGA

One day, the people at Sega woke up and decided to create their own take on *Castlevania*, and here is the result. You play as Hayato, a samurai who must battle all manner of horrors as he ventures across Japan to recover his family's sacred scrolls and sword. The Japanese setting and the upgrades granted by the scrolls distinguish *Kenseiden* from Konami's classic NES game.

FANTASY ZONE II 1987

SEGA R&D 2

This home-exclusive sequel improves on the original with better visuals, the new ability to warp between sections of each stage, a life bar and permanent access to the shop. It's so good, M2 remade it for the System 16 arcade board in 2008.

DOUBLE DRAGON 1988

ARC SYSTEM WORKS

This conversion was a real coup for Master System owners back in the day, as it was arguably the best console release of the game. It's more authentic to the classic arcade beat-'em-up than the NES version, with the crown jewel being the inclusion of simultaneous co-op play – always a welcome feature in this genre.

HOSHI WO SAGASHITE 1988

SEGA R&D 2

This Japanese exclusive has become more renowned in recent years due to an English fan translation, which is retitled *The Story Of Mio* – the Japanese title translates to Searching For The Stars. It's a menu-driven adventure game that takes place in the same solar system as *Phantasy Star*, but there's no threat to the world here. Instead, the relatively sedate story concerns the mysterious, seemingly extinct animal Mio, which the protagonist accidentally acquires while trying to give his girlfriend a gift.

MEGUMI RESCUE 1988

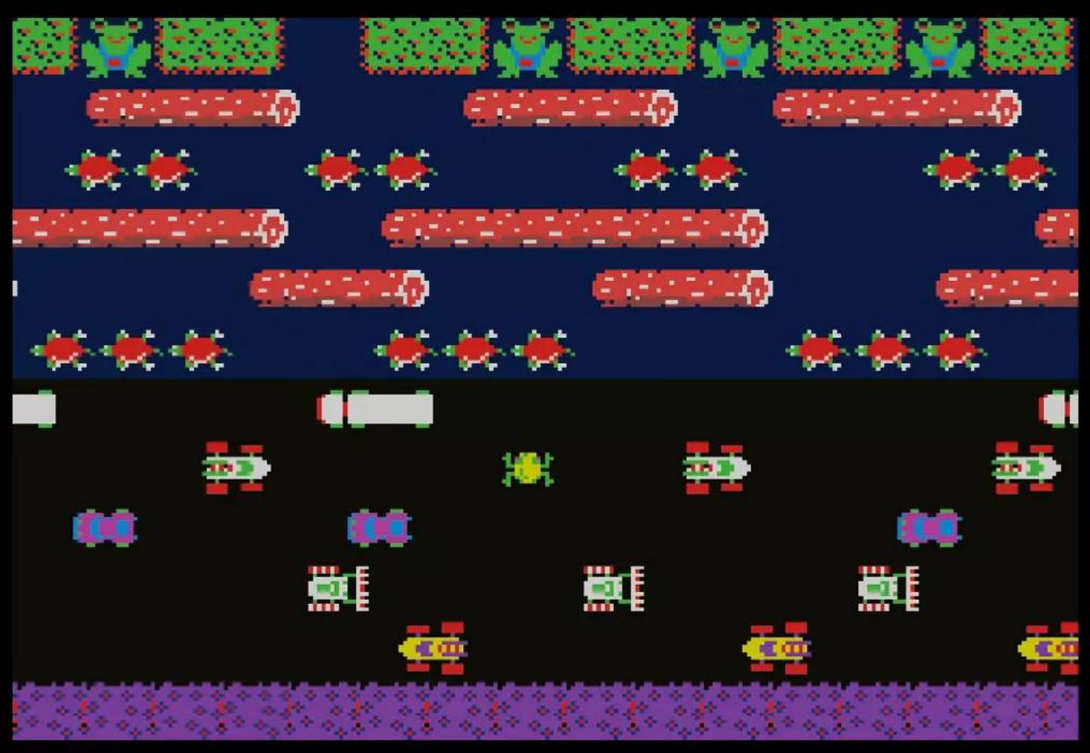
WHITEBOARD

Both *Megumi Rescue* and the paddle controller it requires are exclusive to Japan, but it's well worth looking into. The game, based on a cancelled arcade release, tasks you with rescuing people from burning buildings by propelling a rescuer to their windows via trampoline – fail to reach them in time and they'll jump, hoping you catch them. Its gameplay ends up being an interesting take on Atari's *Breakout*.

BUBBLE BOBBLE 1988

TAITO

Taito's classic single-screen platformer is usually a good time on any format, and that proves true here too. It's a tad slower than the arcade original, but if you get used to that you'll find all the *Bubble Bobble* you can handle – Master System owners are treated to a whopping 200 stages, double the arcade version's level count, you can't feel bad about that because who doesn't love more Bubble Bobble?



THE HOMEBREWER

ENRICOPALLAZZO DISCUSSES CONVERTING CLASSICS TO SEGA'S 8-BIT HARDWARE

What's your history with the Master System?

I don't know that I have any history with the Master System, growing up I had a neighbour with one so I was familiar with it, but I personally had a C64 and NES at the time. As far as inspiration, I became interested in sound chips and FM in particular, so I thought the YM2413 would be a good place to start learning about FM, since the 4-op chips can be kind of overwhelming.

You've put out some very impressive demos in under six months – how were you able to get to grips with the system so quickly?

I'm not really sure. I was more familiar with the 6502, so I started with the C64, then tried the NES. I liked the sprites, but the background attributes were quite irritating to deal with, and there are so many mappers to choose from, which makes it more complicated. So I moved over to the SMS. Programming the sprites and backgrounds was similar to the NES, so there wasn't much to learn. But I found the graphics easier to deal with, because of the 16-colour palettes. I also discovered that I like Z80 assembly much more than 6502 assembly, I find it easier to program. I like the SMS because it is a nice, simple design.

Why does converting classics like *Frogger* and *Contra* appeal to you?

I'm just a Konami fan. In particular I like their music and sound effects. I find their games to be quite clever in the way that they are implemented. Like in *Frogger*, the arcade uses column scrolling, so the contents of the actual screen doesn't really change, only the scroll values. And in *Contra*, the way the tank is implemented in the Snow Field level, for example, is interesting to learn about.

YS: THE VANISHED OMENS 1988

SEGA R&D 2

Sega undertook the conversion of Falcom's excellent action RPG internally, so the game plays very well on the Master System. As the swordsman Adol, you must fight monsters by bumping into them in an off-centre fashion, while searching for the books of Ys in order to stave off a great evil. The combat system sounds silly, but it's speedy and unexpectedly satisfying.

THE COLLECTOR

8BITBOYUK DISCUSSES GETTING THE COMPLETE EUROPEAN SET

Why did you decide to go for a full European set of Master System games?

It was kind of a rabbit hole that I just fell down accidentally. The Master System was the very first console I was bought, I had it right up until I got a job and could buy my own next console, which was the PlayStation. Around 2018 my mum retired and moved, and she said, "I found your old Master System. Do you want it?" And I went, "Yeah, absolutely I want it." I plugged in some dodgy power pack that wasn't the Sega one and it had blown the voltage regulator. So I was messing about in lockdown trying to solder a new one on, and then I went back on the forums again. I got chatting to a collector and I bought a hundred games off him, so I just thought, "I'm going to go for it."

Are there any games you've had trouble tracking down?

The Japanese version of *Great Ice Hockey* never had a retail release – *Beep* magazine gave away a thousand copies. Copies came up, maybe two or three in the last five years, and I only got it in October. It was on a Japanese auction site and I bid as much as I dared bid. I got it for less than half what I was prepared to pay, I got lucky that no one else had the appetite at that moment.

What are your favourite Master System games?

My absolute favourite is probably *Psychic World*. I never finished it as a child. I've got a little YouTube channel, and one of the things I wanted to talk about was having beaten this game that I had as a kid from 1991, and I finally beat in the 40th year of the system. I didn't have any of the *Wonder Boy* games, but I think coming in without any rose-tinted glasses on, all of them are a little bit special.

R-TYPE 1988

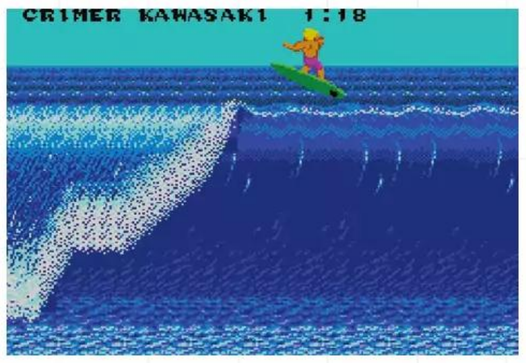
COMPILE

Few horizontal shoot-'em-ups could match Irem's arcade classic in the late-Eighties, and this is a superb conversion. The limitations of the hardware mean that it doesn't look or sound quite as close to the source material as the contemporary PC Engine conversion did, but it does a very good job, especially if you can use FM sound. It feels as close as you could expect though, and there's even an exclusive secret stage hidden away.

RAMPAGE 1989

SEGA R&D 2

Sometimes, you have a bad day and you just want to take it out on society by smashing a bunch of tall buildings. Fortunately, the monster mayhem of *Rampage* has you covered, letting you eat humans and punch tanks too. Few conversions of this game captured the spirit of Midway's arcade original quite as well.



CALIFORNIA GAMES 1989

SEGA

This multi-sports favourite was originally developed by Epyx for home computers, and Mark Cerny – raised in California and residing in Japan – brought it to Sega's 8-bit console. It looks great but more importantly, it includes all of the original events and controls wonderfully. For our money, this handily beats out the later Mega Drive version.

OUT RUN 3-D 1989

SEGA R&D 2

As far as Master System accessories go, the 3D glasses are pretty flashy and attention-grabbing, but suffer from limited support. This stereoscopic interpretation of Sega's hit arcade racer is one of the best games to support the glasses, and is recommended despite replacing two of the three iconic tunes because *Magical Sound Shower* has mercifully been retained.

WONDER BOY III: THE DRAGON'S TRAP 1989

WESTONE

Picking up at the end of *Wonder Boy In Monster Land*, our hero is cursed and turned into a lizard-man. Your job is to guide him through a non-linear platform adventure, assuming different animal forms and using their unique skills until he finally becomes human again. It's a classic of the Metroidvania style, and one of the console's very best games.

PSYCHO FOX 1989

VIC TOKAI

Madfox Daimyojin, an evil priest, has created a bunch of weird monsters and taken control of a country – now one young fox with shape-shifting abilities has to go out and put a stop to his nonsense. The strong relationship between momentum and jumping in this platformer needs getting used to, but it's worth persevering with.

OPERATION WOLF 1990

TAITO

The Light Phaser was a heavily promoted Master System peripheral, so the console received one of the premier arcade lightgun games of its era – in fact, it was even part of some bundles. It's a merry old blast in which you're tasked with rescuing hostages from behind enemy lines in the fictional nation of Cherigo.

COLUMNS 1990

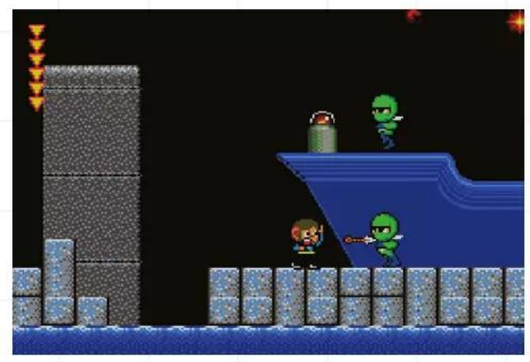
SEGA R&D 1

This jewel-smashing puzzle game retains all of the playability of the previous versions, but has some neat twists too. Flash Columns challenges you to eliminate a specific jewel buried at the bottom of the playfield, while Versus Mode allows you to sabotage a friend.

GAUNTLET 1990

TIERTEX

European third parties got on board with the Master System in the early Nineties due to its increasing regional popularity, and this was an early US Gold release. Though the four-player action of the arcade game isn't possible to replicate on the humble 8-bit machine, everything else about this conversion is close to the original.



ALEX KIDD IN SHINOBI WORLD 1990

SEGA R&D 2

Merging ninja combat and platforming was a fantastic move, as Alex Kidd's final outing is arguably his very best. Alex is nimble, flinging himself from lamp posts and jumping from wall to wall, while the remixed take on *Shinobi*'s world proves to be both exciting to explore and humorous – just wait until you see the reinterpretations of some of the *Shinobi* bosses.

PAPERBOY 1990

TIERTEX

Here's another top arcade conversion from Tiertex, this time of an occupational bent – you're on your bike and must make sure subscribers get their newspapers, no matter whether dogs, speeding cars or unicyclists decide to ruin your round. Do well, and you might even get new customers.

THE LUCKY DIME CAPER: STARRING DONALD DUCK 1991

SEGA

Huey, Dewey and Louie have been kidnapped by Magica De Spell, and Uncle Donald has to save them in this platformer. The visuals really capture the Disney magic here, particularly thanks to the brilliant animation of Donald's sprite.

CASTLE OF ILLUSION: STARRING MICKEY MOUSE 1991

SEGA R&D 2

The witch Mizrabel has kidnapped Minnie Mouse, and if Mickey wants to save her then he's got to survive a foreboding forest, a deadly dessert factory, a lethal library and more. This platformer shares its name and concepts with the Mega Drive game but has different level designs and mechanics, and it's harder to beat. You should really play both.

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 1991

ANCIENT

Though Sega's speedy mascot was designed to show off the Mega Drive, Yuzo Koshiro's studio created new stages and concepts for the 8-bit game. In fact, with an auto-scrolling stage, a vertical climb and a maze level, this is arguably the more varied game – and it's certainly more challenging.

ASTÉRIX 1991

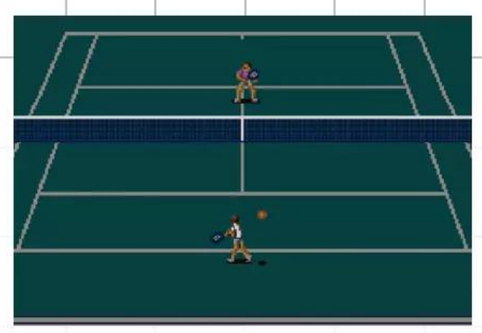
SEGA CS2

This licensed platformer is based on the long-running French comic, and sees Astérix and Obélix travelling around Europe to rescue Getafix, the druid whose potions protect their village from the Romans. It's a good time in general, but what makes this one special is the choice of two characters, who can access different areas with their unique abilities.

MASTER OF DARKNESS 1992

SIMS

Like *Kenseiden*, *Master Of Darkness* borrows liberally from *Castlevania* – however, it's even closer to the inspiration than before, as the story takes you from London to Transylvania to do battle with Count Dracula himself. It's derivative as heck, but it's so well-made that it's hard to be mad about it. Besides, who can argue with a protagonist with the name Dr Ferdinand Social?



WIMBLEDON 1992

SIMS

This tennis game plays well, with a variety of players and three court surfaces. Single players can tackle a tour and build up a created character, and you can play against a friend – or even with them, in doubles matches.

NINJA GAIDEN 1992

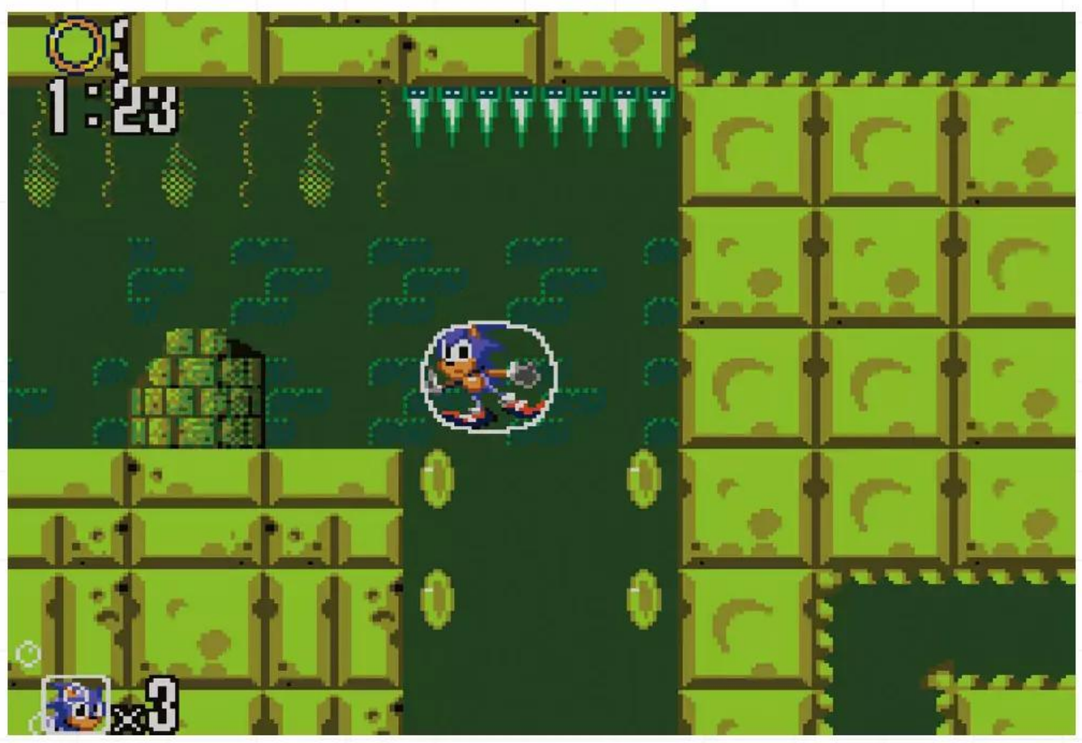
SIMS

Rather than porting one of the NES games, SIMS used Tecmo's trilogy as inspiration for this exclusive adventure. Ryu Hayabusa contends with familiar challenges including rival ninjas and rogue birds, but has new moves like a wall jump. The first stage's background music would almost single-handedly justify playing it, but it offers much more than just that.

RAMPART 1992

DEVELOPER RESOURCES

This unusual action strategy game was a blast in the arcades, and works well at home even without the trackball. Use your cannons to blast an opponent or waves of enemy boats, then repair your fortifications and claim more territory with wall pieces before the hostilities inevitably resume. It takes quite a lot of planning to really experience all of *Rampart*, but that's half the fun.



SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 2 1992

ASPECT

That dastardly Dr Robotnik has kidnapped Tails, so Sonic embarks on a rescue mission. This is totally different to the Mega Drive game, but manages to incorporate features that the original lacked like loops and ring re-collection. It's also harder than the previous 8-bit game, but easier than its brutal Game Gear counterpart.

LEMMINGS 1992

PROBE SOFTWARE

The Master System's hardware is not well-suited for a game like *Lemmings*, but this conversion absolutely nails the look and feel of the puzzle classic. It seriously shouldn't work as well as it does. The music in particular is notable, including some of the best tunes coaxed from the console's PSG sound hardware.

CHUCK ROCK II: SON OF CHUCK 1993

CORE DESIGN

People rarely sing the praises of this prehistoric platformer, but it's actually very technically accomplished. The visuals are generally detailed and colourful, but some of the bosses are amazing for the console, using multiple sprites in a way more commonly seen on 16-bit systems. Don't sleep on this one.

ROBOCOP VERSUS THE TERMINATOR 1993

NMS SOFTWARE

Mighty metal machines do battle in this crossover run-and-gun, with you taking the side of the law as RoboCop. This really flexes the muscles of the console, with some good music, excellent visuals and even clear speech samples. It can suffer a little from slowdown and sprite flicker, but the gore and gunplay are the best you'll find on the Master System.

MASTERS OF COMBAT 1993

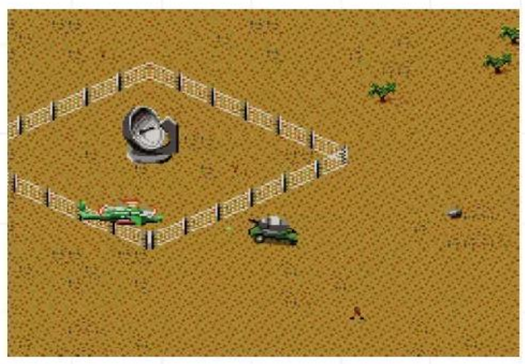
SIMS

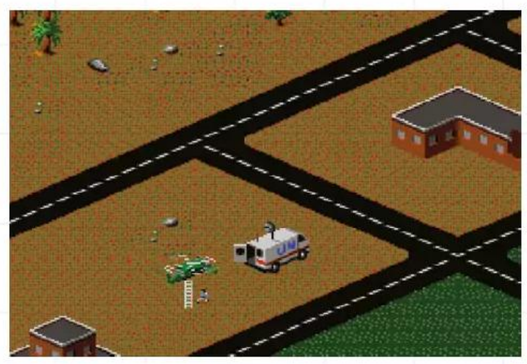
This is short on characters and the characters are short, but in designing this one-on-one fighter specifically for the hardware, SIMS managed to produce a game that is more enjoyable than the Master System renditions of *Mortal Kombat* or *Street Fighter II*. It's speedy, fluid and free of obtrusive sprite flicker.

STREETS OF RAGE 1993

ANCIENT

This belated conversion of the Mega Drive beat-'em-up classic may lack the co-op play of the original and has fewer on-screen enemies, but it is otherwise a surprisingly smooth and faithful rendition that should satisfy anyone looking for a solo scrapper.





DESERT STRIKE 1994

THE KREMLIN

Electronic Arts never published for the Master System, but did license its games for conversion late in the console's life. It seemed scarcely possible that the 8-bit machine could handle this strategic helicopter shoot-'em-up, but this conversion packs in all of the Mega Drive original's features, and includes two control schemes to compensate for the two-button pad.

ROAD RASH 1994

PROBE SOFTWARE

The Master System version of *Road Rash* isn't quite as fast as the Mega Drive version and has less roadside detail, but it keeps the rough and ready, boisterous spirit of the game admirably. This is really the best behind-the-vehicle racer you can get for the console, with all due respect to the *Out Run* games. It still retains all the violence, and who doesn't enjoy hitting people when you're racing at over 100kph?

MORE TO TRY

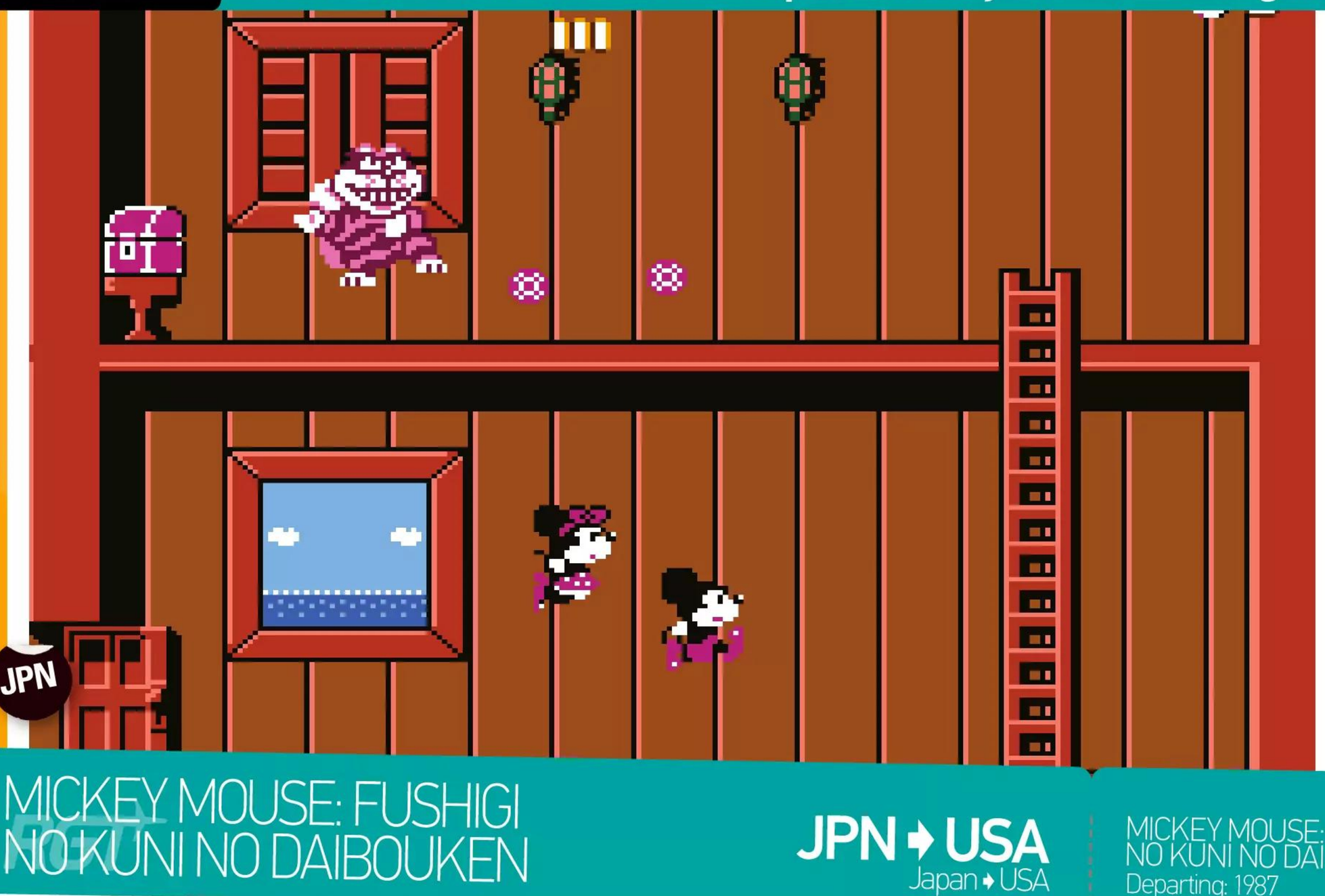
THE NINJA 1986
QUARTET 1987
MISSILE DEFENSE 3-D 1987
WONDER BOY IN MONSTER LAND 1988
RASTAN 1989
GOLDEN AXE WARRIOR 1991
PAC-MANIA 1991
THE NEWZEALAND STORY 1992
LAND OF ILLUSION: STARRING MICKEY MOUSE 1993
MICRO MACHINES 1994

RGT

Retro Gamer Travels

LOST IN TRANSLATION

How the rest of the world experienced your favourite games



» [NES] It's the Cheshire Cat, being all evil and villainous with a big grin on his face.

MICKEY MOUSE: FUSHIGI NO KUNI NO DAIBOUKEN

JPN → USA
Japan → USA

FORMAT
NES

DEVELOPER
Hudson Soft

YEAR
1987

ORIGIN
Japan

LOCALISED FOR
USA

REASONS
Commercial

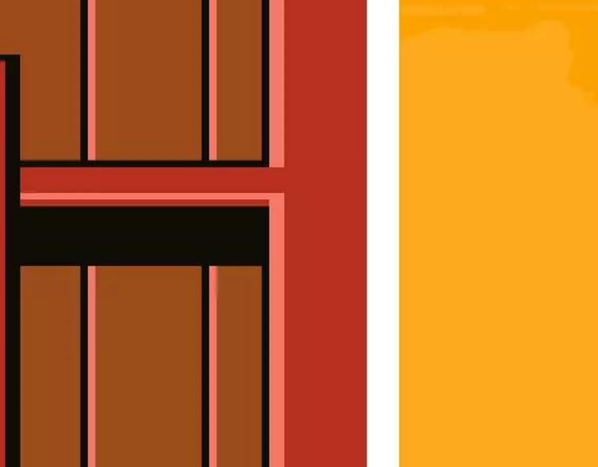
ECONOMY

Capcom was prominently associated with licensed Disney games in the NES days, but the very first one it published wasn't an in-house development – *Mickey Mousecapade* was actually developed by Hudson Soft, which also published the Japanese version of the game. Despite generally being very similar in terms of gameplay and stage graphics, the two games diverge when it comes to plot and characters.

The original Japanese version's subtitle translates as *Adventures In Wonderland*, and the plot of the game has Mickey and Minnie trying to rescue Alice, who features prominently on the game's box art. As such, it's no surprise to see the Cheshire Cat as the game's first boss, or the Queen Of Hearts as the final boss – everything makes sense within the game's setting. Well, everything apart from the fourth level where you visit Neverland and fight Captain Hook, but who's really counting? Capcom's North American release of the game essentially ditched the whole *Alice In Wonderland* connection, and the bosses were replaced with an odd cast of Disney villains. Kaa from *The Jungle Book* shows up, a pirate version of Pete replaces Captain Hook and Maleficent is the game's final boss. That wasn't all though, as many enemies and even the power-ups also had their sprites changed – life-replenishing diamonds became slices of cake, and the Hudson bee was replaced with a diamond. Surprisingly, though the game's manual simply refers to her as a "mystery friend" Alice still appears in the game's ending sequence.

» [NES] Here's Witch Hazel replacing the feline foe for American players, for as much sense as it makes.

MICKEY MOUSE: FUSHIGI NO KUNI NO DAIBOUKEN
Departing: 1987



» [NES] The enemy under the cloud here is the one to watch, as it's redrawn for America.

» [NES] The new enemy doesn't look much better or worse, so the change is baffling.

SUPER STAR PRO WRESTLING

JPN → USA
Japan → USA

SUPER STAR PRO WRESTLING
Departing: 1989

FORMAT
NES

DEVELOPER
Nihon Bussan

YEAR
1989

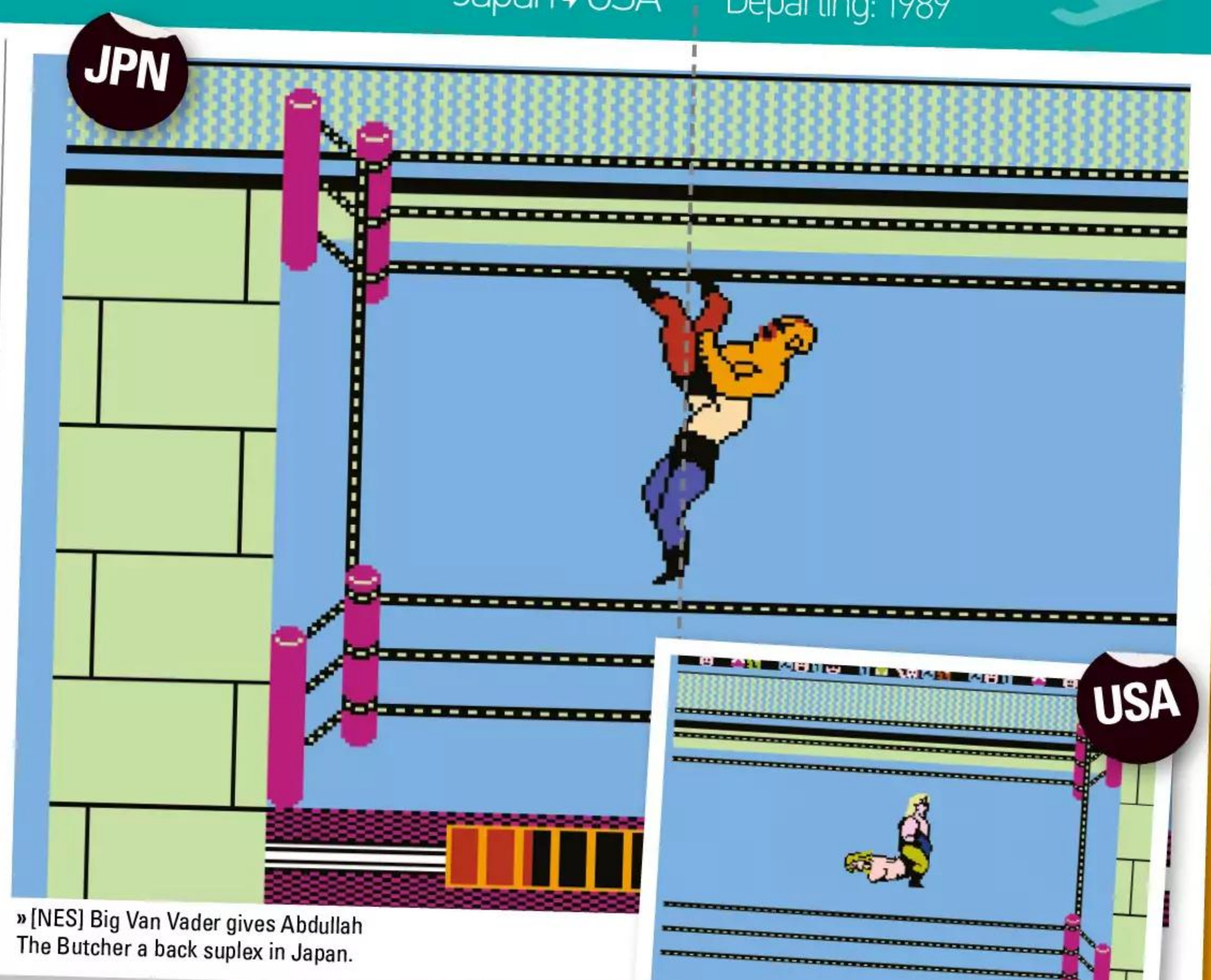
ORIGIN
Japan

LOCALISED FOR
USA

REASONS
Commercial

Wrestling fans today may be familiar with international action, but it wasn't so easy to follow the Japanese scene before the internet connected us all. *Super Star Pro Wrestling* featured stars popular in Japanese promotions, and while American fans will have recognised the Road Warriors and Vader, the likes of Jumbo Tsuruta and Giant Baba didn't have the same appeal – never mind the fact that their appearances weren't licensed to begin with.

An official World Championship Wrestling licence was obtained for the game's North American release, so the localised version replaced the unlicensed grapplers with the stars of Ted Turner's organisation, such as Ric Flair, Sting, Lex Luger and Ricky Steamboat. Some evidence of the game's Japanese origin can be seen in the rules, though – for example, you have a twenty count to return to the ring from the outside rather than the ten seconds traditional in American wrestling.



» [NES] Big Van Vader gives Abdullah The Butcher a back suplex in Japan.

» [NES] Ric Flair slaps a Boston Crab on Michael Hayes in a now highly awkward match.

ECONOMY

THE NINJA KIDS

JPN → USA
Japan → USA

THE NINJA KIDS
Departing: 1990

FORMAT
Arcade

DEVELOPER
Taito

YEAR
1990

ORIGIN
Japan

LOCALISED FOR
USA

REASONS
Cultural

Your town is under attack, and by none other than Satan – yes, *that* Satan – and his worshippers. With more traditional options for repelling the devil apparently unavailable, a clan of multi-coloured ninja children set out to save the world from the ultimate embodiment of evil. It's an odd plot, but one that didn't bother the Japanese developers and does just enough to set up this beat-'em-up.

Judging that Americans are more touchy about religious matters than players in the rest of the world, Taito scrubbed all of the overt references to the fallen angel from the game. He's instead referred to as "the evil one" and a number of instances of pseudo-pentagrams have been edited out of stage graphics. American players wishing to play the uncensored version of the game can seek out *Taito Legends*, which includes the international release of the arcade game rather than the original American version.

» [Arcade] Apparently, Satan's followers aren't particularly bothered by the idea of correct grammar.

» [Arcade] The American text had to be shifted left just to accommodate Satan's new moniker.

ECONOMY

ULTIMATE GUIDE

GHOSTS 'N GOBLINS

IT'S 40 YEARS SINCE CAPCOM INTRODUCED THE WORLD TO THE BRAVE KNIGHT ARTHUR AND HIS FIRST DESCENT INTO THE DEMON REALM. JOIN US AS WE SUIT UP AND FLING LANCES AT ANYTHING THAT MOVES TO CELEBRATE THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNCOMPROMISING CLASSIC, GHOSTS 'N GOBLINS

WORDS BY MARTYN CARROLL

***Ghosts 'N Goblins* is easy. Retro Gamer** came to this surprise revelation recently, when rediscovering the original coin-op at the Arcade Archive in Stroud. After failing to make much headway in the second stage, an onlooker casually stepped up and proceeded to breeze through the game, providing a running commentary on how to approach the tricky bits, the chokepoints, the boss battles.

It was an education. Yes, the game is no cakewalk, but he made it look easy. Some of it was learned – the hidden locations of new armour to protect Arthur's modesty, the glitches you could exploit to avoid some bosses entirely – but a lot more was down to quick reactions. Even when surrounded by enemies, he was jumping and ducking and firing. Surviving, gracefully. The game was unforgiving but fair, he said. By the time he reached the final boss battle – at which point the player is instructed to do it *all over again* to see the 'true' ending – a few more onlookers had gathered to witness this masterclass. It seems like we weren't the only ones transported back to 1985, when the game first appeared in arcades and its fearsome reputation was established.

It's hard to appreciate the impact of the game back then, mainly because the sequels that followed refined the formula so well. But Tokuro Fujiwara's 'Demon World' template was pretty well-honed in *Ghosts 'N Goblins*. As our friend at the Arcade Archive proved, Arthur is very versatile and the controls are super responsive. You can hammer out shots at a rate of knots, and crucially, you can even do this while jumping *away* from enemies, flinging shots behind you. This impression of another Arthur, the King from *Monty Python And The Holy Grail*, lets you, "Run away! Run away!" from impending death.

> "TOKURO FUJIWARA'S 'DEMON WORLD' TEMPLATE WAS PRETTY WELL-HONED IN GHOSTS 'N GOBLINS"

You can also pick up a range of different weapons, including the Torch and Axe, which arc downwards, useful for taking out enemies down below. Sadly, you're vulnerable from above as you can't shoot upwards (that vital feature would appear in the follow-up, 1988's *Ghouls 'N Ghosts*). This makes the fifth and sixth stages, where you ascend the demon lord Astaroth's castle, particularly challenging. Doubly so when you throw in that enemy of many an action platformer – LADDERS! – on which you always seem to get stuck on the rungs, completely exposed and unable to fire.

The look of the demon realm and its inhabitants were also well established in the original. Fujiwara is on record saying that before he created Arthur, he conceived the Red Arremer – that flappy irritant you first face midway through the opening stage – and its design determined the overall visual theme for the game. The enemies were supposed to be funny rather than frightening. Cute even. The sprite work really is wonderful – just take a look at some for the characters that adorn this feature.

The game was released in Japan in September 1985, under its original title *Makaimura* (*Demon World Village*). It arrived in the US shortly after and by all

» [Arcade] You can't even chill in graveyards anymore, without some winged demon turning up, stealing your woman.

» [Arcade] If you shoot the gravestones in stage one or the rocks in stage three multiple times, the Magician appears and turns you into a frog. Random.

» [Arcade] The second stage introduces new hazards, like dodgy platforms that drop when you step foot on them.

» [Arcade] Each stage features a hidden pot containing bonus armour. To make it appear on stage one, jump up at this precise spot.

» [Arcade] Those damn crows can be picked off with a few well-placed shots.

» [Arcade] Keep on your toes when crossing stage three's burning bridge of death.

» [Arcade] The sixth stage is a boss rush of sorts. It's almost impossible to pass this point without sacrificing your armour.

» [Arcade] Just when the infamous moving platform section couldn't be any more annoying – a Red Arremer shows up.

THE CHRONICLES OF ARTHUR

UNCOVERING THE MAINLINE ENTRIES IN THE SPRAWLING SERIES

GHOULS 'N GHOSTS

■ The 1988 follow-up is a visual tour de force, running on Capcom's CPS-1 hardware. It looks incredible, and plays pretty damn fine too, with Arthur gaining some new moves, weapons and power-ups to effectively take on the ever-swelling army of the dead. A perfect sequel.

SUPER GHOULS 'N GHOSTS

■ The Mega Drive received a quality conversion of the second game, while in 1991 the SNES was awarded an exclusive sequel that finally blessed Arthur with the lifesaving double jump. Apart from some unwanted slowdown, this is another excellent entry in the series.

MAKAIMURA FOR WONDERSWAN

■ Released for Bandai's handheld in 1999, and only in Japan, this is not a version of the original but a sequel that introduces branching paths for the first time. The monochrome visuals do diminish the series' gaudy appeal, but it's still worth seeking out.

ULTIMATE GHOSTS 'N GOBLINS

■ This 2006 reboot for the PSP marries 2D platforming with 3D-style backgrounds and it looks wonderful. The gameplay doesn't translate as well, with so many moves and items that it detracts from the experience. A revised version (*Gokumakaimura Kai*) was later issued in Japan.

GHOSTS 'N GOBLINS RESURRECTION

■ After various mobile spin-offs, the series made a welcome return to consoles and PC in 2021. The art style takes a little getting used to, but you're on familiar ground when it comes to the difficulty level. This is old-school hard and a great homage.

CONVERSION CAPERS

NES

■ The first conversion to arrive set the bar pretty high. All of the content from the original is here, and you even have to run through the game twice to get the good ending. Bar a few graphical glitches and performance issues, this is admirably close to the coin-op.

ZX SPECTRUM

■ This version is held in high regard and it's easy to see why, delivering a decent interpretation – of the first two stages at least. The third stage is a mess and then it ends abruptly with a final battle against two Red Arremers. We guess no-one got that far to be disappointed.

AMSTRAD CPC

■ Structurally this is similar to the Spectrum version, with just three stages (the third one is more faithful, ending with the Dragon boss). But, but – look at it! The sprites are oversized and the screen lunges forward rather than scrolls. The in-game music is good though.

COMMODORE 16

■ This makes the iffy CPC version look like *Sonic 2*. Only the first two stages are included (and they have to be loaded separately at that), and it plays even worse than it looks. Capcom should make a sequel where Arthur's final challenge is this abomination of a game.

C64

■ A classy conversion that outshines the other 8-bit computer versions. The first four stages are included and the gameplay is very close to the original (ie difficult but fair, although the shoot backwards while jumping move is missing). The music is great too.

accounts – well, just the one, the US industry trade magazine *Cashbox* – it was a hit in both regions. "The big focus right now is on *Ghosts 'N Goblins*, licensed from Capcom and being marketed in the US via a joint venture between Digital Controls and Taito America," *Cashbox* reported in October 1985. "The game, a hit in Japan, is already doing big numbers in the US in terms of earnings. Digital Controls advised that advance sales topped the 1,000 mark." In the following issue, it revealed that the game's weekly earnings were in excess of $400 at several US test locations, comfortably outperforming Atari's *Paperboy* and Capcom's own *Commando*.

> "THE ENEMIES WERE SUPPOSED TO BE FUNNY RATHER THAN FRIGHTENING... CUTE EVEN"

Ghosts 'N Goblins came out in the time before coin-ops were routinely reviewed in consumer mags, but it did catch the attention of *CVG* and its roving reporter Clare Edgeley. Writing in the November 1985 issue, she made no direct mention of the difficulty level, but based on the review, it seems like she didn't make it past the first stage! The continuous play feature was praised as a "nice touch" (a sentiment arcade owners no doubt agreed with), and overall she rated the game. "*Ghosts 'N Goblins* is fast and intriguing. Well worth playing, if only to see what other horrors lie in store. I'm afraid the ghoulies got me every time." One criticism was levelled at the soundtrack, which she dismissed as "droning funeral music". This is a surprising comment, as Ayako Mori's baroque-style soundtrack is highly regarded and the opening graveyard theme would become a signature for the series.

Following its successful arcade debut, the game made the leap to home systems in 1986. First up was the Famicom/NES version, which was programmed by Micronics and included all of the stages, bosses and secrets (including some new hidden items). It even introduced an extra complication (as if one was needed), where each boss was immune to a certain weapon, and you only discovered which one through trial and error. The game required a 128KB cart to fit everything in, but this luxury was not afforded to the 8-bit computer versions which were developed by Elite Systems. The story goes that Elite didn't want to use a multiload system, so the amount of available space was limited to the target machine's memory. As a result, the Commodore 64 version has four

CROWS

THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE DOWNRIGHT BEASTLY

PC

■ This version is out there, doing its own thing. It's flip-screen for a start, so you can avoid encounters by nipping to the next screen! All of the weapons are included, but they operate identically, and the sixth stage is missing. It's oddly playable, but it's not *Ghosts 'N Goblins*.

PC-88

■ Looking similar to the NES version, but with monochrome backgrounds, this release for the Japanese home-computer range features all of the stages. It's crippled though by character-block scrolling, which is a nightmare for a game that relies on precise actions.

ATARI ST

■ A curious effort. It features large, well-drawn sprites, but the playing area is quite small which results in a cramped feel. Worse, only the first four stages are included, which is unforgivable for a 16-bit disk release. Mark Cooksey's soundtrack almost saves it.

AMIGA

■ Not the ST port you probably expected, this is an extremely faithful rendering of the coin-op that looks, sounds and plays just like the original. We'd say it beats the NES as the best conversion, with one caveat – you can't fire backwards while jumping away (sad face).

GAME BOY COLOR

■ Released in 1999, this is a conversion of the NES version rather than the coin-op. The display has been 'zoomed in' to account for the smaller screen, but otherwise it's a faithful port. There's also a new password system so you don't have to start over each time.

stages, and the Spectrum and Amstrad CPC versions only have three. Worse, in the CPC and Commodore 16 versions, you die instantly when hit – presumably because having an extra sprite of Arthur in his undies was simply out of the question. Still, Elite's versions were highly commended in the Best Arcade Game category at the 1986 Golden Joystick awards (Hewson's *Uridium* was the winner).

Elite would make good use of its licence, dusting it down in 1990 to release versions for the Atari ST and Amiga (whether this was motivated by US Gold releasing its conversions of *Ghouls 'N Ghosts* at that time, we couldn't possibly say). The upside of this was that the Amiga received the most faithful conversion yet – in our estimation it is 95.5% perfect. For that extra 4.5%, you'd have to wait until 1998 when Capcom released a direct port of the coin-op for the PlayStation and Saturn as part of its second *Capcom Generations* collection, which also featured the first two sequels and various assets/extras.

The original game has since become an ever-present fixture of Capcom's retro compilations, including *Capcom Classics Collection* (Xbox, PS2, PSP), *Capcom Arcade Cabinet* (Xbox 360, PS3), and *Capcom Arcade Stadium* (Xbox One, PS4, Switch, PC). The NES version has also stood the test of time, appearing on Nintendo's online services for the Wii, 3DS, Wii U and Switch, as well as the NES Classic Edition mini console. If you want to play the preferred arcade version these days then *Capcom Arcade Stadium* is the recommended route, as you can buy the game as a standalone title for less than two quid. And for a small amount more, you can purchase an invincibility cheat – perfect for those who want to experience the game but don't have fast reflexes, or a friendly arcade guru. ✱

» [Arcade] You can't even chill in graveyards anymore, without some winged demon turning up, stealing your woman.

» [NES] In the NES version, the flashing Yashichi symbol will either increase or decrease your time by 30 seconds.

» [Amiga] Elite's conversion must have been based on the Japanese coin-op, as it features the original Cross weapon (it was changed to a Shield in the West).

BOSS RUSH

HOW TO EXORCISE THE DEMON LORD AND HIS EVIL MINIONS

STAGE 1

CYCLOPS

■ Cyclops (aka Unicorn) guards the first door, jumping up and down. He has two attacks – fireballs and a lethal leap towards you.

HOW TO BEAT THEM: The fireballs can be easily jumped, but the leap is tricky (you can run beneath him if you dare). Just keep firing and retreating, firing and retreating.

STAGE 2

CYCLOPS ROUND 2

■ He's back, and this time he's brought his twin brother along. One leaps over you and the other guards the door – a Cyclops sandwich.

HOW TO BEAT THEM: The tactic is to advance slowly so you only have to face one at a time. Deal with the one on your left first, then dispense with the other as before.

STAGE 3

DRAGON

■ Dragon floats around the screen, trying to fry you with a fire attack. It's made up of a head and eight independent 'tail' sections.

HOW TO BEAT THEM: While you can destroy the tail, this will reward points only. Its head is the target, so observe its pattern and attack the head as it flies away from you.

STAGE 4

DRAGON ROUND 2

■ As in the previous stage, although thankfully there's no twin team-up this time. His tactics and strength remain much the same.

HOW TO BEAT THEM: Like before, wait for the opportunity to attack the head as it moves away. If you're overwhelmed, the bridge acts as a good cowering spot.

STAGE 5

SATAN

■ This guy is like a fully evolved Red Arremer, which is about as pleasing as it sounds. He swoops down on you while firing deadly orbs.

HOW TO BEAT THEM: You can't hurt him when he's cloaked in his wings, so wait for him to swoop and open fire. Forget climbing down the ladder – he just follows you.

STAGE 6

SATAN ROUND 2

■ The toughest encounter in the game – two Satans, one on the left, one on the right, who team-up to take you down at the last hurdle.

HOW TO BEAT THEM: As with the two Cyclopses, you need to fight them independently. Lure the one on the left downwards if you can, then return for the other.

STAGE 7

ASTAROTH

■ Providing you have the Shield weapon, you get to face the big cheese, the head honcho, *the mayor*. He advances slowly, spitting fireballs from his twin mouths.

HOW TO BEAT THEM: His vulnerability is the face in his midriff, which you can only hit effectively in mid-jump. Successfully shoot this spot ten times to win.

"THE ORIGINAL GAME HAS BECOME AN EVER-PRESENT FIXTURE OF CAPCOM'S RETRO COMPILATIONS"

GREEN MONSTER

DEVELOPER Q&A

RICK FRANKISH REVEALS THE STORY BEHIND ELITE SOFTWARE'S BELATED AMIGA CONVERSION

» [Amiga] The Ice Palace opening section of stage two. Elite actually released an unofficial semi-sequel called *Beyond The Ice Palace*.

» [Amiga] Faffing around with the coin-op was worth it. The game is one of the most accurate conversions to appear on the Amiga.

Can we begin with the obvious question? Why did Elite convert the game in 1990, five years after the coin-op appeared?
Elite had various coin-op licences dating back to the 8-bit era and the Atari ST and Amiga were covered under the previous agreements. The 16-bit userbase was increasing at that time and this was seen as a new source of income. *Ghosts 'N Goblins* had been very successful on the 8-bit computers.

How do you get involved in the conversion?
I'd been doing ST to Amiga ports since I'd started at Elite, as I was the only programmer with Amiga experience. The Amiga version had been outsourced to a freelancer in Manchester. This was apparently way behind schedule and then [Elite boss] Steve Wilcox heard a rumour that the programmer was working on US Gold's *Ghouls 'N Ghosts* conversion, so the contract was terminated. We drove over to Manchester to pick up the arcade cabinet that Elite had supplied as a reference.

Were you able to glean much from the coin-op?
The original brief was "make an Amiga version ASAP", but I looked inside the cabinet out of curiosity. I had an electronics background unlike most of the people in the industry at that time. I pulled the ROMs out and uploaded them using an EEPROM programmer and then wrote some code to arrange the data in different patterns looking for graphics. I quickly found all of the background and sprite graphics and Dave Percival, the graphic artist on the project, matched them up to palettes. Within a couple of days I had a simple demo with the main character running around the first level, with a custom screen mode with the same dimensions as the coin-op. This was seen as some kind of magic – Steve Wilcox was entirely non-technical.

The end result is very close to the coin-op, suggesting you also 'lifted' the game logic?
One of the ROMs was full of 6809 machine code and I casually suggested that I could extract the game logic from that. While it was relatively simple to disassemble the machine code, it was a much harder job to figure out what the code was doing. We had no documentation for the code or the coin-op hardware and no prospect of support from Capcom.

Wouldn't it have been quicker and easier to have ported the ST version?
I was bored with straight ports from the ST by then and it was, at least at first, fun to reverse-engineer the coin-op and literally duplicate it as far as possible.

Was the Amiga a good target for the game?
The Amiga hardware was quite idiosyncratic and very different to the coin-op. The main character used all of the Amiga hardware sprites in 16 colour mode. I used a 32 colour screen – it would usually be 16 colour to match the ST – and Dave did a good job of converting the individual coin-op palettes to a per-level global so we didn't visibly lose any colour. The levels were too large for a simple scroll implementation using the Amiga hardware and ended up being a hybrid software/hardware implementation.

Despite all this, some magazine reviewers moaned that the game required 1MB memory to run instead of the standard half-meg!
This was probably a non-decision, in that I just assumed that everyone would have a RAM expansion pack as you needed that to run most non-games software. Had I realised it was an issue, it probably wouldn't have been difficult to make it run in 512KB. Time pressure may have contributed to this too.

The Amiga didn't have a great track record when it came to coin-op conversions. You must have been pleased that *Ghosts 'N Goblins* bucked the trend?
The gameplay was essentially a copy of the coin-op. Looking at videos on YouTube, I notice that the Amiga version is missing some visual elements. I doubt we would have missed this at the time so it probably reflects the rush to ship the game once *Ghouls 'N Ghosts* was released. US Gold held most of the licences for the current coin-ops and it probably made commercial sense for them to ship as rapidly as possible and rely on advertising and the strength of the IP. We used to joke that while journalists wrote the reviews, the advertising department wrote the scores.

Sonic 3D: Flickies' Island

DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

» RETRORE-EVIVAL

» MEGA DRIVE » 1996 » TRAVELLER'S TALES

Back when I was growing up, I really enjoyed *Sonic 3D*. I wouldn't say that it was my favourite *Sonic* game, and it certainly wasn't the one I played the most as I didn't own a copy of my own, but I found plenty to like about it. It's a great-looking game for the hardware, the music is so good that some of it ended up being recycled for *Sonic Adventure*, and it offered a different kind of challenge to Sonic's other Mega Drive outings – which was probably a good thing, as it would have been tough to push the formula much further than *Sonic 3 & Knuckles* had. Consequently, I was very surprised when I first got online and discovered that the consensus on *Sonic 3D* wasn't as positive as I had thought.

One thing that I quickly learned was that American players seemed more inclined to dislike the game, and a survey of the reviews in British and American magazines of the time confirmed that our friends across the pond received the game less warmly. For a good while, I puzzled over what could drive such a critical divide. I can't say for sure, but I think it comes down to differences in our gaming heritage. Isometric games like *Ant Attack*, *Knight Lore* and *Head Over Heels* seem to have been a far more prominent part of the UK gaming diet, and as such the perspective felt more natural to players who grew up with those games.

It's fair to say that *Sonic 3D* wasn't perfect and the game's original programmer, Jon Burton, clearly felt so too. He revisited it in 2017, making significant tweaks and additions to create the greatly improved *Sonic 3D: Director's Cut*, which is the version to play today. All the same, I do find it interesting how cultural differences can cause one game to produce such divergent reactions from two different audiences. ✱

MAGAZINE CRAFT

DAVE KELSALL

Pick an EMAP gaming mag from the Nineties to early Noughties and there's a high likelihood that Dave Kelsall was involved in it in some way. As a designer and art director, he has worked on an impressive number of iconic publications throughout his career. We caught up with him to chat classic games, special projects and games magazines that never were

Words by Stuart Hunt

THEN

Dave started out as a junior designer on *Nintendo Magazine System* and *Mean Machines Sega* at EMAP, whilst also doing odd bits for *CVG* (where he even got his own retro column). He later joined a special projects team, tasked with creating visual concepts for new magazines. He then worked at Dennis Publishing as art editor of the popular alternative mag *Bizarre*.

NOW

Dave can now be found at Future, as the art director of *The Week Junior*. He's been on the super-successful children's news weekly since issue dot, and it's about to celebrate its 500th issue. While it's far away from the rambunctious pages of his earlier publications, Dave still gets to drop in the odd bit of gaming content now and then.

Can you tell us about your earliest videogame memory, Dave?
As a child, my family used to holiday in Llandudno in the Seventies and there was an arcade at the end of the pier called The Golden Goose. It was smoky, smelly, had sticky floors and was full of kids looting the machines and sticking wires in the coin slots to get them to register free credits. I loved it. The whole family used to go. I was around seven or eight at the time and remember playing stuff like *Night Driver* and *Boot Hill* with my sister – who would always beat me. As much as I adore videogames and enjoy collecting them, I've never been very good at them.

What type of games did you enjoy the most?
I loved arcade games and still do. Stuff like *Battlezone*, *Tempest* and *Asteroids*, but I also enjoyed the simulator-style games, such as Namco's skeet-shooting game *Shoot Away*. I rarely get stuck into an RPG or a quest, *Zelda* is about my limit. I always remember watching Gary Harrod, the art editor of *Official Nintendo Magazine*, play the Japanese versions of RPGs with Japanese text and I have no idea how he managed to finish them.

What was the first personal computer you remember seeing?
It was in school. My science teacher unveiled a black-and-white screen with a ZX81 connected to it. We all lined up and were told that we could press a few buttons. I couldn't wait. When I saw the characters appear on the screen, I was immediately hooked. I also had an Atari 2600 growing up. The games were quite expensive, so we only had a few. I remember one birthday getting Atari's *ET* and I remember obsessively playing it and thinking it wasn't that bad – perhaps because there was no way of taking it back.

What were your favourite videogame mags?
I was an avid *Crash* and *Zzap!64* reader. Both were great, but *Zzap* was the magazine I obsessed over. I lived in Shrewsbury, near Ludlow, and when I knew the magazine was about to come out, I would hop on a bus and go to Ludlow newsagents to see if they had it in earlier, not understanding how distribution worked. Occasionally I'd find it. I read it cover to cover. A brilliant magazine.

How did you get into art and design? Did it begin as a hobby for you?
I had a friend who worked at a hot air balloon company called Thunder & Colt. He would draw the artwork for the balloons and create

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TIPPED! TIE Fighter • Outpost • The Chaos Engine!

» *PC Games* was the first magazine that Dave got to design himself. His approach to covers was inspired by *Crash* and *Zzap!64*, enlisting the help of comic-book artists.

» Dave began his design career creating hot air balloon graphics using an Amiga.

the presentations for their clients using Rotring pens. At the time I had an Amiga and thought I could do this on a computer. I didn't have a job at the time so started messing about with Deluxe Paint. I created some designs, printed them out and showed them to him. He liked them and I joined the team as they had an opening, so I did that for a year. I then left to study graphic design at Cheltenham & Gloucester College. They had a suite of Apple Macs. It was there I learnt QuarkXPress and how to layout pages and create brochures. I realised that's what I enjoyed most.

> "Oz [Browne] asked if I could copy this Predator 2 logo, which he had on this scrap of paper, and I said yeah. It took me about half an hour, and when they saw it, they said I got the job"
> DAVE KELSALL

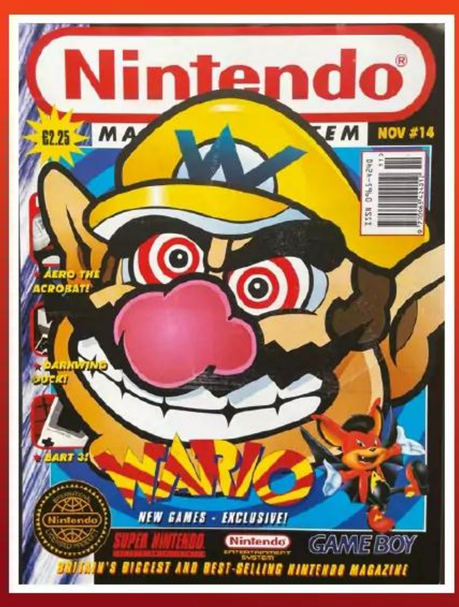
And your big break in games media, how did that come about?
It was all down to Julian Rignall. I used to always read *Crash* and *Zzap!64* and I was on an art trip to London and spotted him standing by a buffet cart. I went up to him to say hello and explained that I knew who he was and that I was a fan of his magazine. We got chatting and where I live is about 20 miles from Ludlow, where Newsfield was based. He invited me to visit their offices. It was great. I got to meet Oli Frey, Gary Penn and the rest of the team. Later, we went down the pub, and I think I even stayed the night playing games. It was incredible.

Didn't you start in the industry working on *Mean Machines* at EMAP?
Well, fast forward a couple of years, to me finishing college and wanting to work on magazines, and I was with my girlfriend who was going for a job interview in London. I was on the train, reading *Mean Machines*, and saw they were advertising for a designer. When I got to London, I phoned them up and asked to speak to Julian. He remembered me and invited me in for an interview that day.

Wow, fortuitous timing. What happened next?
I just turned up in my shorts. I had no portfolio, ▶

My FAVOURITE GAMING MAG

"I think probably some of my best covers are the ones for *Bizarre* magazine. I would be involved with everything. I would speak to the stylist, get the clothes made, the set dressed, brief the photographer. Even though I didn't do anything, it was my vision, and I was proud of how those turned out. If I had to pick one of my videogame magazine covers, I would have to say the Wario cover I did for *Nintendo Magazine System*. I just loved it. Just a massive face with the spiralling eyes. It doesn't look like much now, but back then I remember thinking it was the best thing I had done."



I REMEMBER WHEN

FLUFFING ON TV
"I once took part in a journalist challenge on a television programme called *Games World*. I was doing well but fluffed the penultimate challenge, which was *The Addams Family* on the SNES. I'd played the game in the office and thought I could win this. Then the challenge started and I immediately fell to my death!"

I REMEMBER WHEN

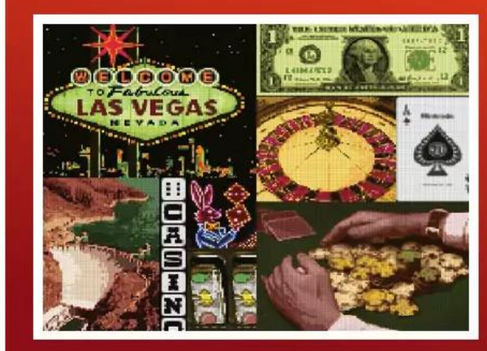
SUPER MARIO SIXTY-PHWOAR!

"I remember sitting in the games room in the original EMAP building and we'd just received the very first imported N64. Someone put on *Super Mario 64* and there were piles of us sitting on this sofa. Paul Davies was playing it, and we were all just blown away. I don't remember any other game at EMAP having that same impact."

My BEST PRESS TRIP

LAS VEGAS

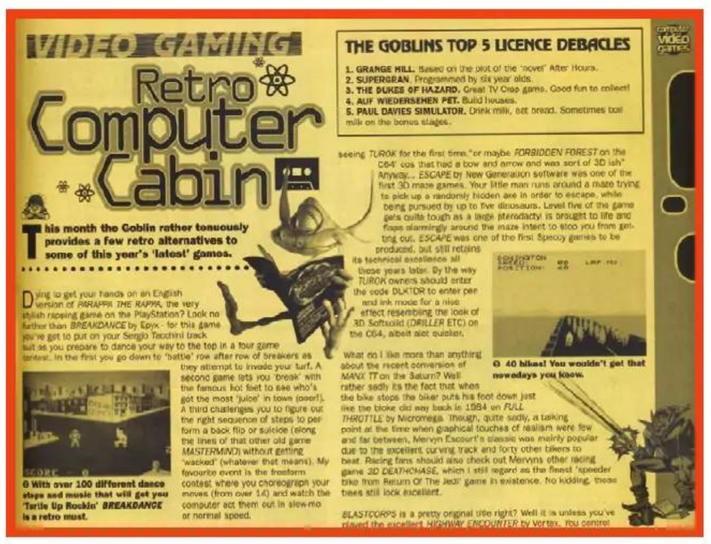
Dave wasn't sent on many press trips when he worked on games magazines, but that all changed when he became the art editor of *Bizarre* and found himself sent all over the world for cover shoots and features. "I remember they sent me on a three-night press trip to Las Vegas," remembers Dave. "The top steak restaurants, a helicopter flight over the Grand Canyon, they also put us up in a swanky hotel and gave us money to gamble with, and all I had to do is look at *Rainbow Six: Vegas* on the PSP for an hour. I'm ashamed to say the PR had to come and knock on my door to wake me up because I got very drunk the night before. I remember shovelling croissants into my mouth, trying to keep my eyes open during the presentation. It was shocking behaviour really. The PRs were lovely, and I apologise profusely."



nothing prepared. Oz Browne and Gary Harrod were there, and they said, "Look we've just bought all these Apple Macs, do you know what do to with them?" And my eyes lit up. I had gotten heavily into a programme called Adobe FreeHand, which let you make vector graphics and illustrations. It's now Adobe Illustrator. Oz asked if I could copy this *Predator 2* logo, which he had on this scrap of paper, and I said yeah. It took me about half an hour, and when they saw it, they said I got the job. I didn't know where to live or what to do, but I found this place above an antiques shop near the EMAP offices. Two weeks later I was the junior designer on *Nintendo Magazine System* and *Mean Machines Sega*, just before the *Mean Machines* split and they had just stopped doing paste-up – so I joined at the perfect moment. I worked on the first issues of both.

Tell us about the design team working on videogames at EMAP at that time.

There was a little pool of designers, including myself, Fraser Gray, Claire Coulthard and Tom Cox, that were managed by Gary and Oz. I learnt a lot of disciplines from them that I didn't know. I just drank everything in. At that time, we didn't have great artwork – there were no media assets, no internet. We had to rely on Japanese magazines and the images would be tiny. So, Julian said to me, "You're the *Predator 2* guy, can you create Mario, Wario and Bowser, and when the games come out, we'll put them on the cover." To earn a bit of extra money, I would go into the office on weekends and draw, copy and scale the art to a size that would fit a front cover and be used for things like posters. I don't think Nintendo ever realised it wasn't official art.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This month the Goblin rather tenuously provides a few retro alternatives to some of this year's 'latest' games.
40 bikes! You wouldn't get that nowadays you know.
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» *CVG* readers may remember the Retro Computer Cabin that ran in its Freeplay section. It was Dave who wrote and designed the column.

Even though I was learning a lot, I had this skill that no one else really had at that time, so it was my thing for a while. At the weekends, the whole place was full. There were games, machines and prototypes everywhere and people would just go in for fun. There was always someone roaming around. Paul Davies was always there. I'm pretty sure he lived in the games room.

You worked on *Nintendo Magazine System* and *Mean Machines Sega*. Did you also get to work on *CVG*?

No, they employed a very talented designer called Jaime Smith, who took over *CVG* with Paul Davies. At one point I became art director and would meddle with most things, but with Jaime's stuff I didn't have to. He was brilliant, still is brilliant, and still doing magazines. I think he manages a team of designers at Egmont now. After *Nintendo Magazine System*, I helped

» Dave was responsible for many of the character covers for *Nintendo Magazine System*. He would redraw them from Japanese magazines and then scale them up.

» Never seen before (as far as we're aware), EMAP's pitch issue of *Dreamcast Official Magazine* – the licence would go to Dennis Publishing.

launch a magazine called *PC Games*. I didn't know much about PC gaming, but it was the first time I was let loose to design a new magazine by myself.

> "On the weekends, the whole place was full. There were games, machines and prototypes everywhere and people would just go in for fun"
> DAVE KELSALL

Did you find that experience challenging?
One of my favourite design studios was The Designers Republic, way before they created the branding for *WipEout*, so I contacted them to ask if they could create the logo for the magazine. I was also a fan of the comic-book artist Simon Bisley, and so I asked him to draw the cover. I thought it was going to be the best magazine on Earth, and it wasn't. I'd forgotten who the reader was and basically designed a magazine for me. It didn't really gel: The Designers Republic logo, the gothic-looking horror painting. One of the first things I commissioned was *Doom II*. My thinking was to do what Oli Frey had done with 8-bit games but for PC games. It just didn't work as well. We then did a magazine called *PCX*, which I don't think anyone has ever seen. I have a dummy of the front cover. What I learnt from my experience on *PC Games* I put into that, but that mag didn't happen.

Did you work on any other dummy issues at EMAP that never saw release?
I worked on an *Edge* competitor with Julian called *Tekno*. I remember when we were coming up for ideas for the front cover, Julian said, "How about me riding a motorbike on the moon?" And I remember thinking, "I don't know how to do that [Laughs]." That wasn't the cover we went with in the end. Without Julian, I don't think I'd be sat where I am now. It's like that movie *Sliding Doors*. Meeting him on that trip, the train, the phone call, the job. Had I not met him I'm not sure my kids would have been born – I'd be somewhere else living a different life.

You did some writing too, and even had your own retro-gaming column in *CVG*, right?
I was the Micro Goblin and wrote the Retro Computer Cabin column in the Freeplay section of *CVG*. It was kind of tongue-in-cheek, although I was serious about what I wrote. I would write about the old days, old arcade games, and it was very much a nostalgia thing. Sometimes I would talk about something happening in *CVG* that month and link it to something that was done 15 years ago on the Spectrum. I remember getting to interview Tony Crowther about one of his new games at the European Computer Trade Show (ECTS) and asking him about all his old games. I think he wanted to talk about the new stuff, but I was bringing it back to things like *Potty Pigeon*.

Did you get to work on anything else that was retro-related?

My BEST INTERVIEW

MARK HAMILL

Dave is a bit of a *Star Wars* fan, so was delighted when, while working on *PC Games*, he got the opportunity to ask actor Mark Hamill a burning question during a *Wing Commander III* press junket. "PC games were getting quite big, and they had green-screened him in as an actor, and had used his voice, for the game," explains Dave. "We went along, and it was full of PC game journalists asking him about his role in the game. When it was my turn to ask a question, I asked him if he collected *Star Wars* figures. He said he did and kept them in his loft. Growing up, he was my hero, and I adore *Star Wars*, and that was the one thing I always wanted to ask him. I got the chance. I also got to interview Anthony Crowther for *CVG*. He told me he programmed *Loco* and *Blagger*, two brilliant games, in just two weeks each. There was also a C64 game called *Shelter*, that was a bit like *Doom* but written on machine character code, that he'd written and never got released. That was an exclusive for the Micro Goblin back then."

I REMEMBER WHEN

DAVE 'THE KICKER' KELSALL
"Working on *Sega Saturn Magazine*, the Sega PR very kindly gave our names to the programmers working on *Sega Worldwide Soccer 97* for the Saturn. If you've got a copy you can play as Kelsall. I have no interest in football whatsoever but had to buy the game because I'm in it (well, sort of)."

My PROUDEST MOMENT

"I think my first day at EMAP. Designing my dream magazines and surrounded by people I had never met but felt like I knew so well, because I had seen them in magazines for years. I couldn't believe I was going to see my work in print, in a newsagent, and I learnt from people that I read about and had seen. Gary Harrod, Oz Browne, they were always in the magazine doing something. Even I was in the magazines. I've got a few funny pictures of me doing a games challenge with East 17, and me and Rad Automatic standing there like dorks wearing Sega T-shirts for an advert. You knew these people because you had seen them and their pictures. Most magazines didn't get those personalities across, so I was proud that I was going to be part of that. It was a dream really. I remember my first day in the office, I walked into the lift and Paul Davies was standing there and he said, 'Hellooo,' in the way that he would. And I said, 'Hello,' and he said, 'Who are you?' I explained that I had just started, and he said, 'Ha! I'm up there too, fifth floor. We'll riiide together!!!' And off we went. We've been lifelong pals since."

I REMEMBER WHEN

LANSTALKER

"I remember working on *PC Games* and a lot of the writers were playing a game together but in different parts of the office. I went to have a look, and they were playing LAN *Doom*. It was the first time I'd seen an FPS, which is now one of my favourite genres. I remember thinking, 'This is going to be huge.'"

I also got to work on *The Complete History Of Computer And Video Games*, which was a giveaway book that Paul Glancey wrote, and Paul Davies edited. It was a brilliant little book with glossy pages and a metallic cover with a *Space Invaders* alien on the cover. I did that with them as it was the book I always wanted to do. There are loads of books about videogame history now, but back then that was quite unique. I remember it being the pre-internet days, so sourcing the images was super hard.

> "I worked on an Edge competitor with Julian [Rignall] called Tekno. When we were coming up for ideas for the front cover, Julian said, 'How about me riding a motorbike on the moon?'"
> DAVE KELSALL

You also worked on some Sega mags at EMAP too. Tell us about those.

EMAP had *Sega Magazine*, and they wanted to secure the official licence for *Sega Saturn Magazine*, so that was the next thing I worked on. I did the dummies to show Sega and then when we got the licence I worked on the first 15 or so issues until I moved on again. Richard Leadbetter and Sam Hickman were on the team then. Sam was brilliant, Richard was funny. He and Gary Harrod were like a double act and would continually take the mickey out of each other when they later worked together on *Maximum* – this huge, 200-page gaming magazine. Every issue would have pages and pages dedicated to a single game. It was great, and I did a lot of freelance for it, but it didn't last long. Working on *Sega Saturn Magazine* was good because we would get all the Sega Saturn silvers, the early releases, get to go to all the parties, all the official artwork, renders and covermounts. It was great. A brilliant time.

What happened after your time on *Sega Saturn Magazine*?

After *Sega Saturn Magazine*, EMAP introduced a special projects team. I think we had moved offices to the Docklands at that point. We would work on things as a team, and I think the first project I worked on was the relaunch of *PlayStation Plus* – the issue with Lara Croft on the cover. We did a load of market research

» Dave worked with both editors of *Sega Saturn Magazine* – Richard Leadbetter and Sam Hickman (seen here).

to determine how we could be different. Magazines had gotten a little bit laddish at that time, which we had kind of picked up on, so it had a bit of a *Loaded* feel.

You also worked on the pitch issue for the official Sega Dreamcast licence, which went to Dennis Publishing. Can you tell us about your concept for the magazine?

After helping with the successful relaunch of the *Official Nintendo Magazine*, I was back with the special projects crew and worked on the pitch for the official *Sega Dreamcast Magazine*. Sadly, we didn't get it, Dennis Publishing won it, but what we created I still think looked good. We knew that Dennis would go in with a lifestyle-style magazine and we had a similar approach. I guess Sega preferred their take. My idea was a very clean, futuristic-looking magazine that moved away from the look and style of Mega Drive and Sega Saturn mags and echoed the brighter, cleaner look of the Dreamcast. I wanted it to look like *SKY Magazine* but about videogames.

Did you find yourself involved with any other interesting projects while you were working at EMAP?

After that, I did *Project Magnum*, which was a boys' lifestyle magazine that was like a toned-down *Loaded*. I worked on that with Jaime Smith and a guy called Adam Smallman. I also worked on another gaming magazine with Alex Simmons called *The Player*, which started life as a pitch for the *Official UK PlayStation Magazine*, which we didn't get. There then came a point where we stopped getting the official licences and people left and came and went, and I got put onto a new magazine called *Internet Magazine*. That move led me to learning new ways of working, because the magazine relied on commissioning great illustrators and photographers. It was a creative magazine about helping people to learn about and use the internet. The magazine came to a natural end and that was my goodbye to EMAP.

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JUST £3.50
THE BEST MAGAZINE FOR CURIOUS KIDS
HAPPY BIRD-DAY!
We're 15 in December
How Angry Birds turned from a little game into a smash hit p24

» Dave still gets to do the odd gaming cover for *The Week Junior* – here's one he did to celebrate *Angry Birds* turning 15.

You then moved to Dennis Publishing and worked on the magazine *Bizarre*.

At the time it was one of my favourite magazines because it was insane. I saw a job advert for *Bizarre* magazine, and thought I could do that really well. They took me on as a freelancer originally, but then I was made art director. I did that in its heyday – mega budgets, doing photoshoots with cover stars in LA, getting clothes designers to make outfits for models for photo shoots. It was about ten years of absolute fun. As the internet took hold, so the magazine petered out and those budgets dropped. I then went freelance for a time, working on everything from *Kerrang!* to Disney mags. What was good was that I learnt to do weeklies, which are punishing, and kids' magazines which are a very different discipline. Dennis Publishing rang me out of the blue one day and said we're doing a magazine called *The Week Junior*, a weekly news magazine for kids, would you be interested? I had gotten used to the punishing weekly schedule and the kids' markets. It was perfect!

Which brings us to today. You've been on that publication for a long time. You must really enjoy it.

I joined from issue 0. It's now published by Future and we're gearing up for issue 500. It's doing really well. It's proper grown-up news for children that's explained well and is unbiased, just facts. Occasionally, we do some videogame content. We have an On-Screen page, which I try to do as much as I can, as it's like the old days. We rarely do gaming covers, but we did work with Sega on a *Sonic* cover wrap. We also did the 15 years of *Angry Birds* and had them destroying the front cover. It's fun and I absolutely love the magazine. ✱

My FUTURE CLASSIC

AKKA ARRH

"I love anything by Jeff Minter. He does stuff that no one else does. It's proper, trippy, arcade action. Even if I don't understand what I'm doing, like in *Space Giraffe*. But recently he did *Akka Arrh*, which I really like on the Switch. It's lovely. It's what I feel videogames should be for me. I can't wait for his forthcoming interpretation of *I, Robot*. I've always loved the original."

» Dave with his daughter Kitty – both are big fans of *The Week Junior*, the magazine Dave now works on.

I REMEMBER WHEN

DUMPSTER DIVING

"At EMAP, when we didn't have enough room to store the game boxes and instructions for our hundreds and hundreds of SNES games, they were just binned. A few cartridges and early prototypes were also ditched. A few of us did manage to fish a few out of the skip, but to this day I think what a waste."

Peripheral Vision

Super Game Boy 2 fact

■ If you're handy with a soldering iron, it's also possible to mod the original Super Game Boy to include a link cable port and get the correct clock speed.

SUPPLIED BY
EVAN AMOS

Super Game Boy 2

» PLATFORM: SNES **» YEAR:** 1998 **» COST:** ¥5,800 (launch), £65+ (today, boxed), £45+ (today, unboxed)

The Super Game Boy was a great idea. Who wouldn't want a way to play some of those great games on the TV, without worrying about lighting conditions or battery life? Many players were happy with it, but it wasn't a perfect device – most notably, it didn't include any support for the link cable. Though some games such as *Wario Blast* included Super Game Boy-specific code to support two SNES controllers, most games were restricted to single-player as a result.

That simply wouldn't do at a time when *Pokémon* was the most popular Game Boy game around, so this Japan-only upgrade was released. The Super Game Boy 2 includes a link cable port, using the same connector as the Game Boy Pocket. The original model ran about 2.4% faster than a real Game Boy, so the Super Game Boy 2 also includes an oscillator that allows it to run at the exact speed of a Game Boy, which is crucial to keeping linked systems synchronised. Finally, an updated set of screen borders is present for games that don't have their own. *

ESSENTIAL GAME
POP'N TWINBEE

Sometimes, you're just not in the mood to battle and trade little monsters, and that's when you need something like *Pop'n Twinbee* as an alternative. Konami's vertical cute-'em-up is one of the very few Game Boy games to offer co-op play at all, never mind within its genre, and allows you and a friend to shoot down enemies and collect bells together. The game was an early release in Japan, arriving in 1990, but it didn't come to Europe until 1994 and never made it to North America at all.

THE MAKING OF

SUMMER CHALLENGE™ WINTER CHALLENGE™

NOT ALL OF US ARE OLYMPIC ATHLETES. BUT WE CAN ALL JUMP THE HIGHEST, RUN THE FASTEST AND THROW THE FARTHEST THANKS TO GAMES LIKE WINTER AND SUMMER CHALLENGE. EVEN WITHOUT AN OFFICIAL LICENCE FROM THE IOC

WORDS BY PAUL KAUTZ

IN THE KNOW

- **PUBLISHER:** ACCOLADE
- **DEVELOPER:** MINDSPAN
- **PLATFORM:** PC, MEGA DRIVE
- **RELEASED:** 1991, 1993
- **GENRE:** SPORTS

MindSpan Technologies was founded in Vancouver in 1987. And of course the studio's first game had to be an ice hockey simulation (*FaceOff!*, 1987). Various smaller projects followed until 1991, when the company's first proper title was released under the banner of distributor Accolade – *The Games: Winter Challenge*. In December 1991, two months before the start of the 1992 Winter Games in Albertville. The game's sequel, *Summer Challenge*, was released in November 92 – three months after the 24th Summer Games in Barcelona.

Following the tradition of Epyx's *Games* series, neither game had an official licence from the International Olympic Committee. This was not for lack of trying, as John Boechler, graphics artist for both games, tells us, "Accolade was our publishing company. I believe they looked into obtaining the licence but could not agree to the terms presented by the IOC. The packaging name changed from *The Games: Winter Challenge* for the PC version to *Winter Challenge* for the Sega version. I'm not sure whose lawyers got involved to make that happen but someone did not like The Games and felt it caused issues with licensing."

Nevertheless, the general symbolism of the games was quite obvious. Especially in the American advertisements, which featured shiny medals accompanied by the slogan, "It will put more than hair on your chest." The same ads also talked about that great sporting event that takes place every four years and in which only the best athletes in the world compete – but, of course, without ever using the phrase 'Olympic Games'.

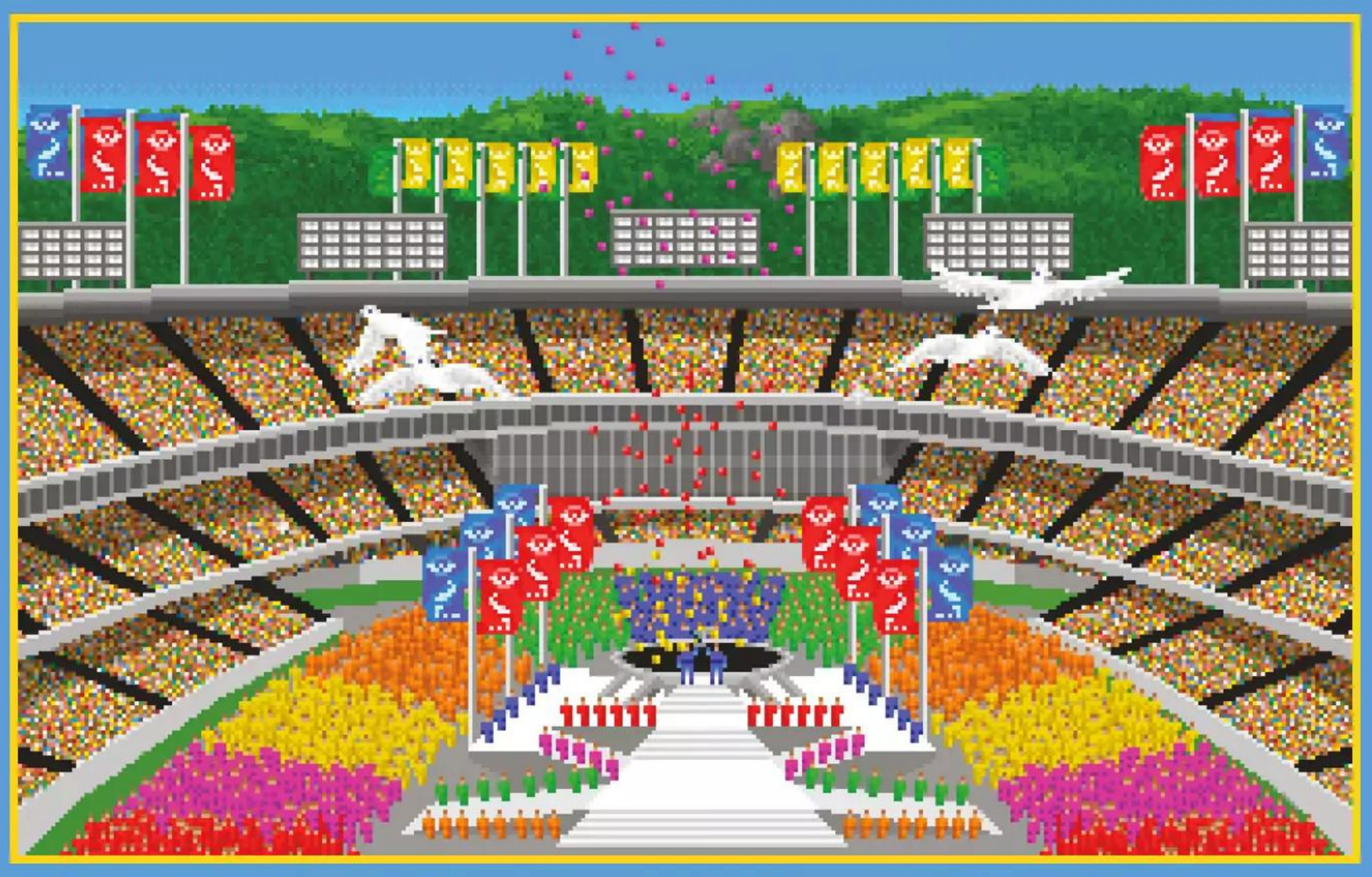
This approach gave MindSpan and Accolade the freedom to cover both the

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

FACEOFF! (PICTURED)
RELEASED: PC, C64
PLATFORM: 1987

JOE MONTANA FOOTBALL
RELEASED: PC
PLATFORM: 1990

HARDBALL 3-6
RELEASED: VARIOUS
PLATFORM: 1992-1999



» [PC] The tournaments start off with a beautiful opening ceremony, featuring flashing cameras, lots of balloons and fluttering doves.

Winter and Summer Games without having to play by the IOC's rules. However, the very small development team was under considerable time pressure, especially for *Summer Challenge*, which had to be created in less than six months, so a lot had to be recycled: the basic control scheme, the menu structure, the opening ceremony and the athlete portraits are identical in both games, as is the handful of music pieces. According to John, there was no other way, "Budget, time, and memory constraints were to blame. There were only three of us full time on the crew and we had a limited amount of time to meet the contract deadlines. We knew what would fit on a disk from the *Winter Challenge* game so we kept within those parameters for *Summer Challenge*."

JOHN BOECHLER

■ John was the graphics artist on both *Winter* and *Summer Challenge*. After MindSpan went under, he became a freelance graphics designer which he is to this day. You can find out more about his work at islandstudio.ca

There are eight disciplines to choose from in both games: In *Winter Challenge*, these are Luge, Downhill Skiing, Cross Country Skiing, Bobsled, Speed Skating, Giant Slalom, Biathlon and Ski Jump. *Summer Challenge* includes Archery, Equestrian, Cycling, Kayak, Hurdles, Pole Vault, High Jump and Javelin. You can practice each of these events as many times as you like. Or rather, you must do so, if you want to stand a chance in the Olympic Games. But first you have to create your Ace by choosing a name, nationality and face from a short list of mostly very similar-looking men and far fewer women. Not that it matters, as there is no distinction between male and female within the events themselves – which is particularly evident in the digitised character, which is very obviously always a man.

According to John, this is simply due to the fact that both games came on just one 3.5-inch floppy disk each, "We couldn't fit copies of both sexes on the disk due to memory restrictions. Also, the reference material that I started recording was mostly of us guys. Actually, the Equestrian event was a woman that I recorded at a local event. I guess the dress attire doesn't really show that in the game."

Within the tournament you compete against others, who can be either human or computer opponents. There's room for up to ten joystick athletes, but only one after the other in the hot seat, not directly against each other. As John confirms to us, this was not due to laziness on the part of the developers, but once again due to a tight time budget. "A competitive local multiplayer mode was on the list of wanted features, but was eventually removed for programming logistics reasons or debugging time constraints." If you can't find enough real friends to go head-to-head, you can always make do with artificial ones – empty slots are automatically filled with ▶

AN EPIC BATTLE

HOW ACCOLADE WENT HEAD TO HEAD WITH SEGA

■ Accolade was not an officially licensed developer for the Mega Drive system, but still made games for it. This was possible because the company's developers, led by Mike Lorenzen, had reverse-engineered Sega's copy protection and security mechanisms. The main reason for that was to save money, of course, as Sega charged its official partners between ten and fifteen dollars for each game sold, on top of the cost of producing the cartridge. The fact that Accolade simply chose to ignore all of this, and create and sell its games right under the nose of Sega, led to some furious company lawyers.

So on 31 October 1991, Sega officially took Accolade to court and won in the first instance, whereupon on 3 April 1992, Accolade was ordered to remove all its Mega Drive games from shops. Accolade appealed to the next higher court and was upheld on 28 August of that year, citing the "fair use" doctrine of copyright law, which was upheld again shortly afterwards on 20 October 1992. The court ruled that Accolade had used reverse engineering to access data that was not protected by copyright and could only be accessed by decompiling it.

Sega then attempted to reopen the case, which was dismissed on 26 January 1993. In order to keep the peace, bring the matter to a close and perhaps be able to do business together in the future, both parties finally reached an out-of-court settlement on 30 April 1993 – which resulted in the legal costs being shared and Accolade eventually becoming an official licensing partner of Sega. According to Accolade's managing director at the time, Alan Miller, however, the court-ordered sales freeze alone cost the company around $20 million.

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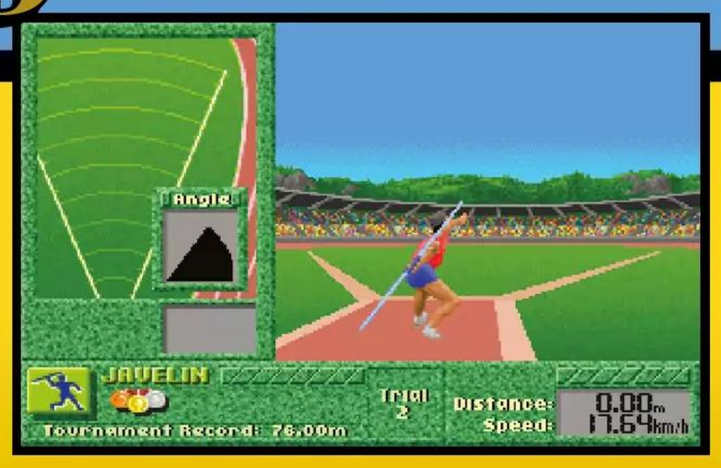
Solid Gold

SIX OF OUR FAVOURITE EVENTS FROM BOTH GAMES

SKI JUMP

■ It's lost to the slopes of time who first came up with the idea of trying to fly with two boards on their feet, but Ski Jumping has been an Olympic event since 1924. In *Winter Challenge*, this requires precise take-off timing, a stable position in the air and a precise landing to avoid becoming a tumbling heap of snow.



JAVELIN

■ Has there ever been a bad time to throw around a sharpened 2.5 metre stick? Even the ancient Greeks did it, as Javelin is one of the oldest Olympic events. It's not the easiest sport in *Summer Challenge*, but one that feels really great when executed flawlessly.

GIANT SLALOM

■ The Giant Slalom is the high-speed version of the Slalom and has been part of the Winter Olympics since 1952. In *Winter Challenge*, you also have the choice to race down the mountain at really high speeds. But resist the temptation to go as fast as you can – one missed gate and your race is over!

» [PC] Some events, such as Hurdles and Pole Vault, were quite challenging as it was difficult to correctly judge the player's position in 3D space.

» [PC] Speed Skating, Ski Jump and Cycling is where many *Winter* and *Summer Challenge* players failed miserably, due to the games' smart copy protection.

» [PC] In order to make every race start a little more exciting, the length of the countdown is never quite exactly the same.

» [PC] Archery requires a very steady hand, as you need to hit the targets as precisely and as quickly as possible.

» [PC] Not all events are gold: Cross Country Skiing and Kayak are arduously long and not much fun.

computer opponents, competing in three levels of difficulty.

The control scheme is kept very simple, with only a few inputs required for each discipline: In some you accelerate by pressing forward, in others you have to press buttons as quickly as possible. And in some, you have to switch between several buttons (or keys on your keyboard): one controls your speed, the other triggers a specific action, such as releasing the pole vault or setting the angle of the javelin throw.

In any case, some disciplines require very good timing: in Ski Jump, for example, you have to pick the moment of your jump extremely precisely; a wrongly chosen fraction of a second can make the difference between 70 and 100 metres. In Cycling, if you don't have a good sense of rhythm, you'll crawl along at the speed of a dreamy sloth. And events such as Hurdles and Pole Vault are a mixture of mashing the button rapidly to go full throttle and pushing it with perfect timing to jump over the obstacle.

Incidentally, there's an unexpected anachronism in Ski Jump, as it does not use the V-Style – instead it resorts to the old-school Parallel jumping style. The V-Style, introduced to the world by the Swede Jan Boklöv, did not become established until later in the early Nineties, making *Winter Challenge* one of the last representatives of an era that did not see this significant improvement in it. John Boechler has a sweet anecdote to share about that, "[Programmer] Jeff Sember got a letter from a woman claiming to be the mother of an Olympic Gold Medallist Ski Jump athlete. She noticed that we had not implemented the V-Style stance properly in the game and suggested we fix it. Jeff had simply not thought of that and gone with the traditional parallel style. I wish we had her playtesting the game before releasing it. Jeff had the letter framed on his office wall."

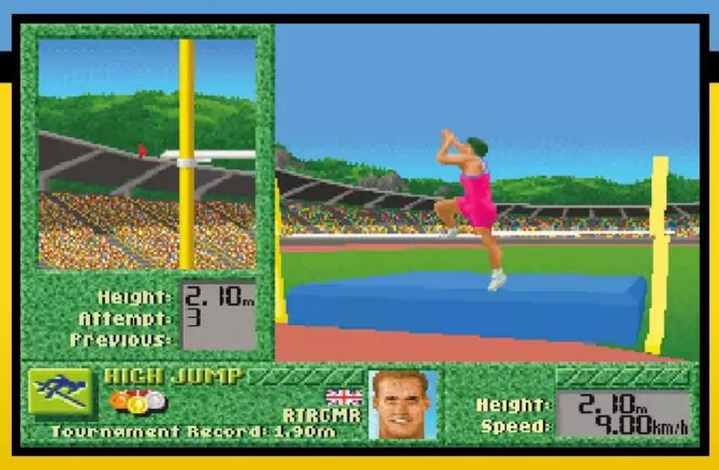
And then there was the game's notorious copy protection. At first glance, it was nothing out of the ordinary: a multi-layered code wheel very reminiscent of *The Secret Of Monkey Island* (albeit with significantly fewer pirates) that required you to align a specific flag, country and city to obtain a number and enter it when prompted to start the game. Of course, this copy protection was quickly cracked, allowing you to enter any number and simply move on with the game. And

EQUESTRIAN

■ Equestrian involves completing an 800-metre course on the back of a horse that will not be amused if you get the timing wrong when jumping over the 16 obstacles scattered around the track. In fact, it acknowledges this failure with a very elegant throw-off animation while being a neigh-sayer.

BOBSLED

■ Bobsled (also known as Bobsleigh) made its way to the mass market thanks to the 1993 hit comedy movie *Cool Runnings*. And just like in that movie, in *Winter Challenge* it is very easy not only to tip over if you misjudge the angle of a bend, but even to fly out of one if you take it with too much gusto! Wheeeeeee!



HIGH JUMP

■ Timing is everything when it comes to high jumping in *Summer Challenge*. It determines whether you fly over the bar in a wonderfully elegant move – or whether the jump ends on the hard floor in front of the mat, accompanied by an athlete rubbing his aching back and cursing, "Ow! That hurts!"

then, after playing it for a while, you started to notice that you just couldn't get past 99 metres in Ski Jump, no matter how hard you tried. And in Speed Skating, you always flew out of the curve on the third lap, no matter how fast or slow you were actually going! The same thing happened in Cycling, too! Were the games buggy? No, that was just the second layer of copy protection working its magic: when it noticed that the initial code check had been bypassed, it simply made some events in the tournament unwinnable.

From a technical perspective, *Winter* and *Summer Challenge* offered an unusual mix of sprite and polygon graphics – or "ultra-realistic graphics" according to the advertising. The hills, slopes and tracks were all simple, flat-shaded polygons. Everything else is made up of sprites, particularly the athletes, which are based on filmed and digitised models that are surprisingly large and, above all, move impressively smoothly. How was this possible, given the extremely limited amount of disk space? "That was the result of the genius programmers Mike Benna and Jeff Sember," John explains. "The

» [PC] Tournament play pits you against up to nine friends or computer opponents.

» [PC] In Biathlon, you must not accelerate too much – too high a heart rate will cause the crosshairs to shake furiously.

player images were cut up into smaller pieces like a puppet. I could then move the pieces around and interchange them in each keyframe of an animation sequence. Then only the pieces and the movement coordinates needed to be recorded, greatly reducing the storage size of the animation."

Jeff got the inspiration for all the animations straight from the source at sporting events. "I went to the BC Winter and Summer Games and videotaped real athletes at some events where I was allowed," says John. "The angle of recording from behind made the camera placement difficult for a live event. Even the horse was filmed live, with the help of many carrots. I did get some weird looks from spectators when I filmed at the Equestrian event since I was only filming them from behind."

On other occasions, the developers themselves jumped in front of the camera, "Mike did the downhill skiing. I skied behind him recording with the camera," continues John. "I recorded myself for the biking and also the crashes, by tumbling onto my bed mattress. The reference footage was recorded on a Canon Hi8 video camera then digitised onto the computer using some

» [Mega Drive] The Mega Drive versions of both games are less colourful than the originals, and run much slower.

'bleeding-edge technology' graphics card. Then the images underwent much editing and colouring in Photoshop and then were animated in our in-house software."

According to John, all of this resulted in very decent sales figures, which unfortunately did not lead to further sequels or conversions to the home computers of the time – although an Amiga version was planned and even described in the manual. The only conversion both games received was on the Mega Drive – and these were overshadowed by the simultaneous dispute between Accolade and Sega (see the An Epic Battle panel). Meanwhile, MindSpan took over the development of the already very successful *HardBall* series for Accolade, which kept the studio busy until early 2000, while the *The Games* series quietly withered away.

Sure, *Winter* and *Summer Challenge* were not the most compelling sports games of all time for solo players. There was some overlap between disciplines, and not every event was a gold medal contender. Also, *Summer Challenge* felt more like an add-on than a true sequel. Still, the wonderful multiplayer mode provided months upon months of Olympic fun. Even without an official IOC licence. ✱

GoldenEye 007

IN THE KNOW

» **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO

» **COMPOSER:** GRANT KIRKHOPE (WITH GRAEME NORGATE)

» **DEVELOPER:** RARE

» **RELEASED:** 1997

» **BEST TRACK:** TRAIN

SELLING EIGHT MILLION COPIES, GOLDENEYE 007 WAS THE TITLE THAT HELPED NINTENDO KEEP PACE WITH ITS BIGGEST RIVAL – SONY'S PLAYSTATION. TODAY, IT LIVES ON AS THE GAME THAT INVENTED THE MODERN FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER. WE LOOK BACK AT ITS INCREDIBLE LEGACY WITH COMPOSER GRANT KIRKHOPE

WORDS BY LIAM HEITMANN-RYCE-LEMERCIER

Bringing Bond to cinemas after a six-year hiatus, with a fresh-faced Pierce Brosnan in the coveted role of secret agent 007, *GoldenEye* was a shot in the arm for the *James Bond* series upon release in late-1995.

Now approaching its 30th anniversary, the videogame it inspired – *GoldenEye 007* – helped launch the new Nintendo 64 into the stratosphere. But it was also a long-drawn-out process that took its toll on everyone involved, including the game's composer, BAFTA nominee Grant Kirkhope.

Dialling in from the east coast of America, Grant recalls his start at Rare in October 1995, a month before the film release of *GoldenEye*. Initially assigned to port the music from *Donkey Kong Country 2: Diddy Kong's Quest* to the original Game Boy, he was soon pulled aboard by fellow Rare composer Graeme Norgate to help him on Rare's new game, *GoldenEye 007*. "So it was agreed that I did the Game Boy in the morning and *GoldenEye* in the afternoon," Grant recalls.

Bond's return to cinema screens was an event keenly on Grant's radar as a confessed "massive *Bond* fan" from day one. "For somebody of my age," he says, "*Bond* movies were the biggest things of the year when I was a kid. The best music, the best action, the best plot – the best everything!"

In approaching the soundtrack to *GoldenEye*, Grant admits he did listen to the experimental film score composed by Éric Serra, but didn't utilise it as his primary musical inspiration. "It was kinda cool, the way he put the *Bond* theme on timpanis and things like that, which we'd never heard before," he says, in reference to Serra's percussion-heavy arrangements of famous *Bond* cues.

» Grant Kirkhope provided the music for *GoldenEye 007* with co-composer Graeme Norgate. He left Rare in 2008 and now lives in the US.

Instead, Grant preferred the lush, melodic textures of veteran composer John Barry – arguably the originator of the series' iconic *James Bond Theme* – as did co-composer Graeme Norgate. The two of them largely ignored Serra's work, opting instead for a double-disc album of all the *Bond* songs from previous films in the series. "We used to listen to that a lot," Grant remembers, using the iconic pop songs across the series for inspiration, as well as "the classic John Barry scores".

The process of making the game itself was a gruelling one, as Grant remembers the many bugs that constantly arose during development. This led to extended delays, with the game originally set to release the same time as the *GoldenEye* film. "No-one thought it was going to be a success," Grant says of the game and its troubled production.

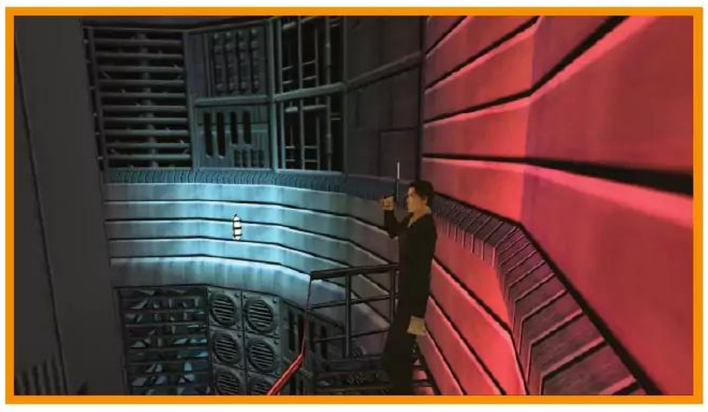
Ultimately released at the end of August 1997, nearly two years after the film it was based on, Grant remembers its production as, "A big slow process of getting it done. By the time we all got it out the door, we just all thought, 'Glad to see the back of it, really.'" By the time it ultimately landed in stores, Grant had already moved on to a whole new Rare production, *Banjo-Kazooie*.

"It was a weird one…" he reflects of the game's success, amidst such a long, bug-ridden development process. "A lot of games these days, they come out straight away and have a big success, and kind of go flat. *GoldenEye* just grew from day one, it was such a weird thing. The second year, it outsold the first year; and the third year, it outsold the first and second year put together! Unheard of in videogames."

With *GoldenEye* having affirmed legendary status among the gaming community, and even within broader pop culture, it's surely the title to which Grant is most directly associated. He doesn't feel it has overshadowed his career, however, even among more recent music credits within the *Super Mario* universe. "I'm happy it's got a big following," he says. "That's pretty great, right? Lots of composers don't get known for anything. It's nice to get that recognition."

Speaking of his own efforts on *GoldenEye*, he didn't set out to produce a career-defining soundtrack. He simply followed the lead set by the team at Rare. "You just do your best," he suggests. "We all did our best and hoped for the best, but no-one for a minute thought it would be one of those games that changed first-person shooters forever. We never thought that, for definite. It's hugely humbling and

» [Xbox One] The music that plays in the Archives mission perfectly captures the on-screen action.



» [Xbox One] There's an aggressive take on the *James Bond* theme as Bond prepares his assault on the silo.

» [Xbox One] Recreating one of the film's most famous lines in the Facility mission, "And the other half…? Fate."

» [Xbox One] *GoldenEye*'s train stage is action packed and its music sets the tone perfectly.

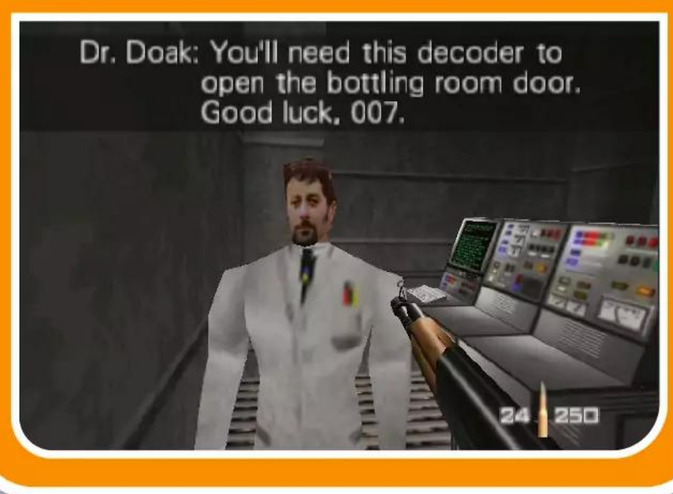
MEET PROFESSOR DOAK

The story behind GoldenEye's famous NPC

■ While the primary characters within the game – Bond himself, Natalya Simonova, and main villain Alec Trevelyan – are based on the original *GoldenEye* actors, many of the NPCs found across the game are modelled on actual Rare developers. Most of them are dressed as anonymous Russian guards, but the most famous NPC is that of Doctor Doak, closely modelled on developer David Doak. The NPC even has the same hair and goatee sported by David at the time.

Appearing in the Facility mission, Dr Doak is a double-agent who aids Bond and, somewhat uniquely, can be killed without affecting the player's mission progress. As such, David himself revealed that the most common things fans say to him is, "Sorry I shot you."

His famous cameo in the game very nearly didn't happen. He was about to leave Rare and relocate to New Zealand at the point he was offered the job on *GoldenEye*.



gratifying to be a part of something so huge." Grant's interests in the *Bond* series later came full circle, when he was hired to score *The King's Daughter*. The period fantasy film stars Brosnan as King Louis XIV, who – somewhat bizarrely – plots to kill a mermaid for its powers of immortality. "Yeah, it's weird how that kind of came round," Grant ponders.

In the years since relocating to America in 2008, he has found that *GoldenEye* garners him more attention among US fans, whereas other territories more keenly identify him within the *Banjo-Kazooie* universe. He is flattered, but doesn't let it get to him. "I don't care what it is," he says, "if you get known for anything, that's great in my book."

And if one of those projects happens to be one of the most beloved videogames of the last 30 years, that can't be too bad, either. ✱

» [Xbox One] You'll hear a familiar *Bond* tune play out whenever you die.

ULTIMATE GUIDE

STALKER

SHADOW OF CHERNOBYL

CAN YOU OVERCOME THE RADIATION, PHYSICS-DEFYING ANOMALIES, TERRIFYING MUTANTS, PSYCHOTIC FACTIONS AND MIND-MELTING MYSTERIES FOUND IN STALKER'S CHORNOBYL EXCLUSION ZONE? REMARKABLY, ONE OF THE BLEAKEST, MOST HARDCORE SURVIVAL-FPS GAMES EVER STILL HAS A VIBRANT AUDIENCE NEARLY 20 YEARS AFTER ITS LAUNCH

WORDS BY STEVE BOXER

Some games are just, well, games – but not *STALKER*. Ukrainian developer GSC Game World's 2007 survival-FPS is nowadays perceived as nothing less than a cultural artefact, of immense national significance (which continues to grow in light of Ukraine's ongoing tribulations). Amazingly, it's still widely played nearly two decades after launch, and its legendary status was extended to new audiences in 2024 with the arrival of *STALKER 2* and the remastered *STALKER: Legends Of The Zone Trilogy*.

But it was far from obvious that *STALKER: Shadow Of Chernobyl* (to give it its full title) would assume any sort of significance beyond the scope of the average game when it launched in 2007. Sure, it was met with acclaim – hailed as a top-notch, hardcore survival-shooter, with a pleasing undercurrent of horror, a (rare at the time) open-world feel, although it wasn't strictly an open-world game, and – perhaps most importantly – bags of distinctively Ukrainian personality.

What it wasn't, even then, was one of the most polished or visually cutting-edge of first-person shooters; it was far from bug-free, some of the AI controlling its enemies and processes could be erratic and while it looked OK, it didn't look great.

But what it did have was a hard-bitten, bleak and at times terrifying ambience that left you with a real sense of achievement for surviving the events it depicted in its wondrously distinctive game world. And what a game world: the Exclusion Zone around the Chornobyl reactor, a source of immense fascination since its meltdown in 1986. In *STALKER*'s bizarro-world, that area, known in the game as the Zone, had acquired all manner of weird and dangerous physics-defying anomalies, and become populated by both mutants (of human and animal origin) and numerous factions of chancers and ne'er-do-wells, and become a magnet for shady and opaque military research.

A delicious premise if you fancied yourself as a sort of hairy-chested hardcore gamer: *STALKER* was very much a PC game (although it has now branched out, in all its iterations, onto consoles) and it really threw you in at the deep end. Initially, it polarised gamers somewhat – as it forced you to start with almost nothing, having to scavenge assiduously for ammo and decent weaponry, many found that they just couldn't get into it. But for those who persevered, the rewards were plentiful.

Despite its refusal to compromise, *STALKER* was a huge success. It found particularly huge audiences in Ukraine, Russia and the surrounding ex-Eastern Bloc countries, who found a game they could really relate to. Such was the enthusiasm of those audiences – and the canniness of GSC Game World – that a modding community soon emerged centred on *STALKER*, taking the base game in all manner of new directions. The *Lost Alpha* mod, for example, exhumed a load of stuff which GSC Game World had left out of the original game – and was itself reworked as *Lost Alpha Revisited*. Another popular mod, *Anomaly*, let you make up your own story in *STALKER* while providing loads of new quests.

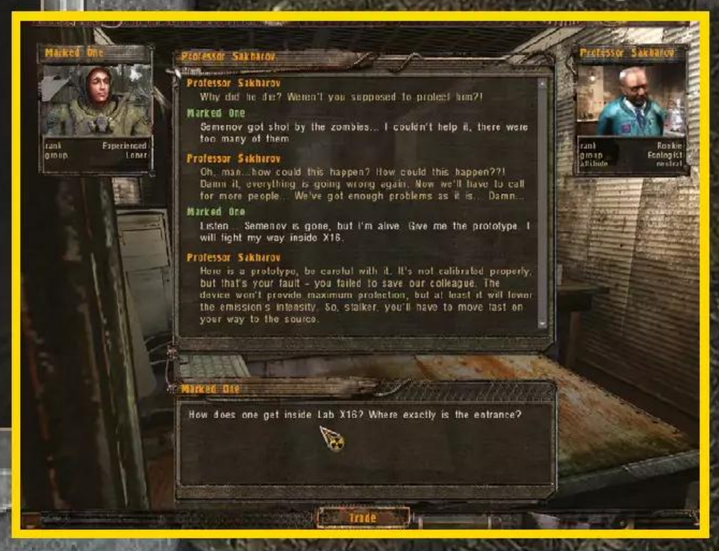
Before that modding scene burst into life, and while *STALKER* was still at the forefront of gamers' collective consciousness, GSC Game World assiduously released two add-ons: *Clear Sky* in 2008 and *Call Of Pripyat* in 2009. *Clear Sky* copped some flak for reusing environments from the original game, but introduced a faction-dominance system which was fun, and gave a glimpse of the Zone in a more chaotic state before *STALKER: Shadow Of Chernobyl*'s events.

Call Of Pripyat, with its concentration on the mythical centre of the Zone and some notable technical and interface advancements (plus a much-needed

» [PC] Campfires abound in *STALKER*, providing welcome camaraderie and respite from the general mayhem.

» [PC] Finding and equipping a scope for your favourite weapon can give you the jump on enemies before they see you.

» [PC] In case you're wondering, *STALKER* stands for Scavengers, Trespassers, Adventurers, Loners, Killers, Explorers and Robbers.


Professor Sakharov
Why did he die? Weren't you supposed to protect him?!
Marked One
Semenov got shot by the zombies... I couldn't help it, there were too many of them.
Professor Sakharov
Oh, man...how could this happen? How could this happen?!! Damn it, everything is going wrong again. Now we'll have to call for more people... We've got enough problems as it is... Damn...
Marked One
Listen ... Semenov is gone, but I'm alive. Give me the prototype. I will fight my way inside X16.
Professor Sakharov
Here is a prototype, be careful with it. It's not calibrated properly, but that's your fault – you failed to save our colleague. The device won't provide maximum protection, but at least it will lower the emission's intensity. So, stalker, you'll have to move fast on your way to the source.
How does one get inside Lab X16? Where exactly is the entrance?
Trade

» [PC] *STALKER*'s game world is extremely atmospheric, thanks to a gripping storyline and the many interesting characters you interact with.

weapon and armour repair and upgrade system), was very well received, and continued to advance *STALKER*'s march towards legendary status. And then the *STALKER* modding scene began to explode, essentially taking the base premise and vibe of *STALKER*, and expanding it into a dizzying number of games that offered startlingly diverse forms of gameplay.

That kept the *STALKER* flame alive – which was just as well since, in 2011, GSC Game World founder Sergiy Grygorovych dropped a bombshell by closing the company – by that stage getting stuck into the development of *STALKER 2* – down. But that was to be far from the end of the *STALKER* legend. GSC Game World was reopened in 2014, with Ievgen Grygorovych (Sergiy's brother) appointed CEO, and in 2018, the company announced it had begun working once again on *STALKER 2*.

As if *STALKER 2*'s development hadn't been troubled enough, we all know what happened in 2022: Russia invaded Ukraine. Suddenly Kyiv was under attack, but GSC Game World had planned for that eventuality, keeping a fleet of buses ready to drive the team and much of their equipment to Ukraine's western border. Eventually, the team wound up in Prague, although many opted to stay in Kyiv, often working under siege-like conditions. GSC Game World, creditably, told its staff that if they wanted to join Ukraine's existential fight, they could, and the company would continue to pay them. Many did, and sadly some were lost to the war.

By that stage, GSC Game World's determination to plough on in the face of relentless misfortune had been given further fuel by *STALKER*'s elevation to the status of a national Ukrainian treasure – indeed, a cultural object that was seen as a contributor to Ukraine's national identity. Like *STALKER*, many Ukrainians had been displaced around Europe, with the very existence of their country under threat, and *STALKER* provided comfort for them.

On a visit to GSC Game World in Prague in late-2024, creative director Mariia Grygorovych explained to us that Ukraine was only properly able to reclaim its national identity when the break-up of the former Soviet Union occurred, just after the Chornobyl disaster – and since *STALKER* was very much focussed on Chornobyl (albeit with plenty of added fantasy elements), it had become a touchstone of Ukrainian national identity.

Before the Russian invasion, *STALKER* fans had even started to emulate the game in real life, dressing up as STALKERs and entering the Chornobyl Exclusion Zone, so they could film themselves exploring abandoned houses and the like – surely one of the most extreme forms of cosplay yet (although thankfully, none went as far as to emulate the game's gunplay). Recognising the game's significance, Russian hackers mounted a hostile campaign against the GSC Game World team in Prague that continues today.

While finishing off *STALKER 2* (which was released on 20 November 2024), GSC Game World also refreshed *STALKER*: Shadow of Chernobyl, *Clear Sky* and *Call Of Pripyat* with a remaster package entitled *STALKER: Legends Of The Zone Trilogy.* That brought the original *STALKER* set of games to a new audience, including those who prefer to play on the current crop of consoles (including the Switch). Now, GSC Game World has announced that it is working on two major items of DLC – in the vein of *Clear Sky* and *Call Of Pripyat* – for *STALKER 2*.

But if you're keen to find out what all the original *STALKER* fuss is about, *STALKER: Legends Of The Zone Trilogy* provides an ideal means of doing so. If you dive into it, you'll find a brutal, uncompromising, ambitious survival-shooter which, while it may lack polish and graphical fidelity by modern standards, more than makes up for that with sheer atmosphere, satisfyingly challenging gameplay and a game world packed with so much personality that you might just end up living a vicarious life in it. Against the most insurmountable odds, the *STALKER* legend lives on. ✱

» [PC] By the time *Call Of Pripyat* came around, GSC Game World had refined its user interface to provide more useful information about equipped ammo and health-restoring items.

» [PC] Trading in *Clear Sky*: it's always worth saving up for the best armoured suit on offer, however pricey it may be.

» [Switch] You'll encounter various mutated animals while exploring the Zone.

» [Switch] *Legends Of The Zone Trilogy* Is a great introduction to the series.

SURVIVING STALKER

SIX HANDY TIPS FOR MAKING IT THROUGH THE GAME

SAVE OFTEN

Unfortunately checkpointing isn't *STALKER*'s greatest strength, but you can save all of the *STALKER* games at any point – even when you're mid-way through picking off a bunch of enemies. Since you will die frequently, it is best to save often to give yourself the best chance of success after respawning after your death.

PAY ATTENTION TO AMMO

Particularly in the early stages of the *STALKER* games, ammo is hard to come by. As you progress, though, it becomes both more plentiful and more exotic – equipping armour-piercing bullets, for example, can pay dividends against soldiers or mutants, and flat ammo makes sniping way more accurate and effective.

EQUIP THE RIGHT GUN

You can only equip one gun apart from the pistol, so pick the right one after assessing your ammo stocks and the enemies you face; re-equipping your main weapon shouldn't be attempted during a gun-battle. It usually pays to have a Viper sub-machine gun as well as an AKM-style automatic rifle. If forced to use the pistol, go for headshots.

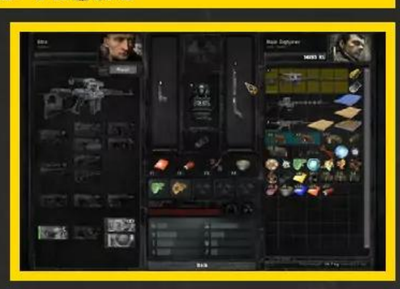
HUNT THOSE STASHES

The more characters you talk to, the more leads you find as to the whereabouts of stashes. You can think of finding stashes as the game's form of grinding. Having trouble with a group of enemies? A stash might just provide the ammo and exotic weaponry you need to prevail.

RANSACK JUDICIOUSLY

It's vital to scavenge as much as you can from any dead bodies, but there's nothing worse in *STALKER* than being killed while you're ransacking a stiff, so deal with all nearby enemies first. Once you start hitting your inventory's weight limit, it's time to be more selective. Avoid the temptation to loot ammo for weapons you don't like.

USE TRADERS AND TECHS



Traders can provide ammo for your favourite weapons and improved body armour, while relieving you of heavy inventory items. Techs, meanwhile, can make your weapons more effective. Well-used weapons jam often and armour wears out, but while you can't repair them in the original game, later instalments are more forgiving in that regard.

» [PC] *STALKER 2*'s rendition of the Zone is even more gloriously run-down and evocative than that of its predecessors.

MORE STALKING

LET'S EXAMINE THE FURTHER INSTALMENTS OF THE STALKER FRANCHISE

STALKER: CLEAR SKY (2008)

The first expansion for *STALKER, Clear Sky*, is a prequel, in which you play Scar, a STALKER uniquely able to survive violent weather emissions. As you make your way to the centre of the Zone, you must negotiate a full-on faction war, picking your favoured sides. *Clear Sky* added weapons-repair and upgrading plus a dominant-faction system to the *STALKER* blueprint, which was welcome. Its depiction of a less settled Zone than the original game makes it worth checking out.

STALKER: CALL OF PRIPYAT (2009)

Call Of Pripyat takes up the storyline after the original game's events, with the centre of the Zone suddenly accessible after Strelok disabled the Brain Scorcher. You play a soldier masquerading as a STALKER, sent in to find what happened to other soldiers the military helicoptered in. *Call Of Pripyat* added new enemies and areas, further refined the upgrading and repair systems, slightly improved the interface and definitely ramped up the horror and weirdness. It follows on beautifully from the original game.

STALKER 2 (2024)

It's a miracle *STALKER 2* was ever released: Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine caused the majority of developer GSC Game World to relocate to Prague. But that just made it more determined to craft a true sequel to the original game, using modern technology. And that's precisely what *STALKER 2* is: it stays utterly true to *STALKER*'s hardcore principles – it's still gloriously unforgiving and often chaotic. But it has a much more prominent story, and its game world and graphics are deep and lush.

DEVELOPER Q&A

WE QUIZZED GSC GAME WORLD'S CEO AND GAME DIRECTOR OF STALKER 2 IEVGEN GRYGOROVYCH, AND GSC GAME WORLD COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR ZAKHAR BOCHAROV, ABOUT THE 2024 REMASTERING OF THE STALKER TRILOGY AND STALKER'S FUTURE

When you decided to remake the first three *STALKER* games for modern consoles, what did you set out to achieve with the resulting *STALKER: Legends Of The Zone Trilogy*?

ZB: The release of *STALKER 2* definitely meant reaching a new console audience – we knew this during the development of the sequel. The idea that the original trilogy should also be available to console players felt very organic and natural. We wanted to deliver the same legendary experience that PC players had to a new audience, but in an accessible form and with some nice improvements along the way (besides controls, we also added things like Achievements). Judging by the feedback from the press and players, we succeeded across all platforms, including the Switch.

How did you balance preserving the original atmosphere of *STALKER* and its two sequels with bringing them more up to date?

ZB: In the console version of *Legends Of The Zone Trilogy*, all the games run on the X-Ray Engine, but on its latest version – the one used in *Call Of Prypyat*. However, this applies strictly to the technical side. The X-Ray Engine performed well on consoles, even though there were initial doubts. In terms of atmosphere, the games differ slightly. Shadow Of Chernobyl feels like the darkest part in terms of atmosphere, *Clear Sky* became a bit more approachable with its vibe, while *Call Of Prypyat* is the closest to a pure sandbox with a wealth of side stories, and its tone reflects that.

The original *STALKER* was designed for keyboard and mouse; how did you set out to refine the games' control systems so they were playable on gamepads?

ZB: *STALKER* is a very hardcore and challenging shooter. Survival and solitude are in the DNA of the franchise – the player constantly feels their struggle against a hostile environment, barely scraping by, never achieving full comfort, always forced to balance on the edge of survival. Of course, the controls and shooting mechanics are a key part of that experience.

Some gamepad control solutions were obvious – like the radial weapon menu. Everything else, including fine-tuned adjustments to the shooting system, aim assist, optimising interface navigation and even movement speed, was implemented gradually with constant checks to ensure it stayed true to the authenticity of the experience. We're incredibly grateful to our partners at Mataboo, who worked on these versions.

Very few games have *STALKER*'s longevity. What do you think are the main reasons behind the fact that people are still playing the first three *STALKER* games so long after release?

IG: The *STALKER* series has a pretty unique gameplay loop. This is a game about expeditions. The player needs to have a rough idea of the challenges they'll face and make the necessary preparations. Understanding your current goal means understanding your needs, what you'll gain, and how you'll make use of it. That's the complexity of needs, and the game's pace, which is controlled by the player and their priorities.

Thanks to the fact that the world is alive and full of points to explore, there's plenty of activity – survival elements are ever-present, and the number and scale of expeditions are largely determined by the player. This is what makes *STALKER* so immersive and shapes that special atmosphere.

At the *STALKER 2* preview last year, you explained how the original game became an important element of national Ukrainian culture – a cultural artefact, if you like. Can you give some examples of how that was manifested?

IG: First of all, it's a game about Chornobyl. Chornobyl is a huge tragedy for Ukraine. But Chornobyl *is* Ukraine. In fact, Chornobyl is located quite close to Kyiv, and you can get there by bus in roughly an hour. *STALKER* was the first Ukrainian game of this scale, it was the first Ukrainian game to become so popular and recognisable in the West, and it frequently appears in lists of the best PC shooters.

It drew attention to Chornobyl, and through it, to Ukraine. Trips to the Zone became exponentially more popular after the game's release. *STALKER* turned into a lifestyle – fans started organising role-playing games, paintball competitions, and more. They began cosplaying, writing books and fanfiction, creating mods. It became a mood, a way of life.

This undoubtedly brings the world's attention to Ukraine, showcases Ukraine's cultural heritage, and is important for Ukraine. Especially now. You don't truly understand how vital your identity is until someone tries to deliberately and systematically destroy it. Normally, you don't even think about the essence of your identity – there's no reason to, you just live. When the full-scale war began, when Ukrainian culture faced the threat of annihilation, we realised how crucial it is for us to recognise ourselves as Ukrainians. How important it is to show this identity to the world. How essential it is to distinguish ourselves from Russia, so that people globally stop seeing us as a colony. We want to share our culture with the world. We want players, through our games, to become fascinated by Ukraine, to want to learn more about our history, our independence.

Now that *STALKER 2* is out and generating a whole new audience, are there any plans to follow it with new instalments in a similar manner to *Clear Sky* and *Call Of Prypyat*?

ZB: Yes. We've openly announced two major story-driven DLCs for *STALKER 2*, and we're already working on them – in a way, it's an approach similar to *Clear Sky* and *Call Of Prypyat* for the original trilogy. The DLCs will feature interesting discoveries, significant storylines important to the entire series, and unconventional solutions. The work is in full swing, and we can't wait to share more details.

LAP
1/3

26

1ST
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6TH

F Zero X

NO, WOLFGANG! IT'S MY N64!

» NINTENDO 64 » 1998 » NINTENDO EAD

Ever since my wife and I have lived at our current home we've had foreign exchange students. The vast majority have been an absolute delight, but every now and then one would get a little too comfortable and that was the case with Wolfgang, who joined the Jones residence for nine months in 1999.

Wolfgang (and no, that's not his real name) was a tremendously confident 18-year-old Swiss student (and no, that's not where he came from either). He was a lovely lad, but did like to push his luck, meaning he'd regularly try to break his curfew, or take treats from the cupboard without asking.

One time he even brought a girl home without permission and she stayed overnight (we caught him sneaking her out early the next morning), which led to us having a talk. He apologised profusely and it never happened again. For all his challenges, Wolfgang was a lovely kid, and as we weren't really that much older than him at the time he'd often hang out with us in the evenings once he'd finished his studies. He'd watch films or play on the N64 with me, quickly becoming a big fan of *F-Zero X*, *GoldenEye 007*, *Banjo-Kazooie* and *Super Smash Bros*. And this is where the most egregious thing Wolfgang ever did came into play.

Because I'm a thoroughly nice chap, I was more than happy for Wolfgang to play on my N64 when I was at work – the only thing he couldn't do was save over any of my existing saved games. When he left a few months later I fired up my copy of *F-Zero X* because I really fancied unlocking the final few cups that I hadn't gotten around to. Annoyingly, Wolfgang had not only mastered the trickier later cups, but had also unlocked every single vehicle in the game as well. I was absolutely furious and complained to my wife, Melanie about it. "Hasn't he actually done you a favour?" she replied. "After all, you don't have to do it yourself now."

But he hadn't done me a favour. In my mind he'd robbed me of the chance to properly complete a game I found genuinely challenging. I can laugh about it now, but at the time it annoyed the hell out of me and I went on about it for months. Needless to say, I don't let students play on my consoles when I'm not around anymore. Lesson finally learnt. ✱

THE MAKING OF

DESTROY ALL HUMANS!

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

ARMY MEN: RTS (PICTURED)

PLATFORM: PC, PLAYSTATION 2, GAMECUBE

RELEASED: 2002

FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR: TEN HAMMERS

PLATFORM: PC, PLAYSTATION 2, XBOX

RELEASED: 2006

THE SABOTEUR

PLATFORM: PC, PLAYSTATION 3, XBOX 360

RELEASED: 2009

IN THE KNOW

- **PUBLISHER:** THQ
- **DEVELOPER:** PANDEMIC STUDIOS
- **PLATFORM:** PLAYSTATION 2, XBOX, MOBILE
- **RELEASED:** 2005
- **GENRE:** ACTION ADVENTURE

AN OPEN-WORLD ACTION ADVENTURE GAME INSPIRED BY ALIEN INVASION FILMS, RED SCARE PROPAGANDA AND FIFTIES AMERICAN POP CULTURE, DESTROY ALL HUMANS! STOOD OUT FROM THE CROWD WITH ITS DISTINCTIVE TONE, SETTING AND SENSE OF HUMOUR. TWO OF THE AUSTRALIAN TEAM BEHIND IT SHARE THEIR MEMORIES

WORDS BY SEAN COLE

» [PlayStation 2] A local newspaper spins onto the screen to report on events at the end of each mission.

» [PlayStation 2] A police officer prepares to shoot as Crypto flies past the TV station.

The idea for *Destroy All Humans!* emerged out of frustration at seeing months of hard work go to waste. Pandemic Studios' Australian team were devastated when *Oddballs*, a quirky co-operative game they were developing, was shelved by Microsoft for lacking edge. In response, they created something radically different that became an unexpected cult classic.

Destroy All Humans! (hereafter referred to as *DAH!*) was released on PlayStation 2 and Xbox in the summer of 2005. Behind such a brash, attention-grabbing title lay a game with a puerile attitude and an abundance of personality. In a delightful twist that captured the imagination of players, they were tasked with becoming the bad guy, someone intent on conquering Earth rather than saving it.

"It was significant because of the angle on it," says animator Lachlan Creagh. "It was a funny game – really offbeat and quite different to things that were around at the time. *Grand Theft Auto* came out just before we were really making *Destroy All Humans!* and then the publishers all wanted to have stuff like that, that was dark and gritty."

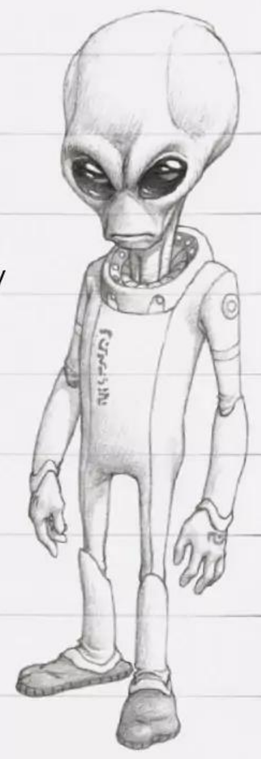
When given the chance, the small yet spirited Australian team consciously went against the grain. An offshoot of the original Pandemic, based in Los Angeles, their office was in Fortitude Valley, Brisbane. The first game they delivered was 2002's solid if uninspiring *Army Men: RTS*. Having proved their worth with existing intellectual property, they were keen to develop some of their own. "After *Oddballs* didn't get picked up, we started brainstorming again. We had an email trail of like 60 or 70 games that we were pitching, including some joke ones," recalls designer Dan Teasdale. "Someone pitched the idea of an alien invasion, but you were the alien. I remember very clearly, it was right before we were going to lunch at this teriyaki place, and we were constantly riffing on this idea. It just took off from there."

Their excitement was a clear sign of the concept's potential, but early versions of *DAH!* bore little resemblance to the final game. The UFO was the primary focus as you flew around cities destroying buildings and gathering humans to feed to space beasts. The team were fascinated with the idea of these grotesque monsters that grew as they consumed people and could eventually be used to wreak havoc. Unfortunately, others were less keen. "I do still miss space beasts," says Lachlan. "Memory would maybe have been a problem, but I think one of the excuses was that it didn't fit into the Roswell mythology of aliens. Whereas we all just wanted to be able to collect humans as meat, process them into giant space beasts and unleash them back onto the unwitting inhabitants of Earth! We loved that idea, and it was hard to let it go."

> "A LOT OF IT WAS JUST HITTING THOSE ARCHETYPES OF FIFTIES AMERICANA. IT WAS KIND OF WRITTEN FOR US"
> **DAN TEASDALE**

Another significant change reshaped *DAH!*, bringing its protagonist, Cryptosporidium-137, to the fore. Dan remembers concern from higher management, and publisher THQ, that the game's focus was too narrow. "Instead of being 80% UFO and 20% on foot, we basically flipped it. That turned it into the game that it is. It's more *GTA*-style. It's more about exploring on foot and being closer to Crypto as a character, which is one of the reasons that people still talk about it."

The chance to play as the idiosyncratic Crypto became one of *DAH!*'s biggest selling points. A belligerent, wise-cracking alien soldier, he's determined to take revenge on humanity after his predecessor, Cryptosporidium-136, is captured by the US army. All snarling disdain and hair-trigger temper, the impulsive Crypto is given orders by Orthopox, his superior officer, but doesn't always follow them. "We wanted that dynamic where Crypto's a loose cannon and he's going to have to be reined in," explains Dan. "Originally, we wanted him to sound British. We thought we could get some humour in there. Then there was a publisher push that was like, 'Hey, what if you have his voice more like Jack Nicholson?' There was a lot of doubt, but we put that in and it worked. The way we developed his character reflects that. His behaviour grew into that voice."



» [PlayStation 2] A swarm of Majestic cars gather as Crypto destroys a diner.

» [PlayStation 2] This title card parodies the 1959 film *Teenagers From Outer Space*.

LACHLAN CREAGH

■ Animator Lachlan Creagh is now an author/illustrator, working on his own children's book, art and comic ideas.

DAN TEASDALE

■ Designer Dan Teasdale runs his own game studio, No Goblin, which has made *Roundabout* and *100ft Robot Golf*.

» [PlayStation 2] Crypto confronts Pox in the game's opening cutscene.

» [PlayStation 2] Crypto descends from his spaceship after landing at Turnipseed Farm.

» [PlayStation 2] Battling Robo-Prez in front of the White House in the final mission.

Both named after causes of disease, Pox and Crypto are the game's two main characters. They are Furons, members of an advanced alien race from the planet Furon, whose defining features are grey skin, large heads, sharp teeth and an insatiable lust for power. But using atomic weapons with wild abandon has caused a damaging genetic mutation, leaving Furons without genitalia and unable to reproduce.

"COMEDY IN GAMES IS DEPRESSINGLY RARE AS TIME GOES ON. I THINK THE TONE IS ALSO A PRODUCT OF IT BEING BUILT IN AUSTRALIA. WE HAVE A LARRIKIN CULTURE OF TRYING TO MAKE OTHER PEOPLE LAUGH"

DAN TEASDALE

Cloning has proved unreliable, introducing more errors to their genetic code, so an infusion of pure Furon DNA, which can be found in human brain stems, is needed to save them from extinction. For the Furons to prosper, humans must be killed and Crypto is eager to do the honours. This bizarre premise propels the story forward.

Sent down to Earth, Crypto's first port of call on this 'crummy planet' is Turnipseed Farm, where he mistakenly interrogates a cow before humans are alerted to his presence. This setting was a late addition to the game, as the team were readying a demo for E3, and set the tone so well that it became the opening level tutorial.

Drawing on a wealth of sci-fi classics and schlocky B-movies, Pandemic already had much of Crypto's path through America laid out for it. *DAH!*'s twenty-two missions are split across six different fictional locations – the remote Turnipseed Farm, rural Midwestern town Rockwell, Californian suburb Santa Modesta, industrial port Union Town, the secretive Area 42, and seat of power Capitol City. "A lot of it was just hitting those archetypes of Fifties Americana. It was kind of written for us," says Dan. "We've got to have the farmhands going crazy, the fair, suburbia, a secret military base. If you're taking over the world, you've got to take over Washington. The one that probably fit the least, but worked out, was the dock-style area (Union Town). That came from our prototype."

From the playful script to the eerily atmospheric Bernard Herrmann-style score, *DAH!* is packed full of genre-film references, satire, parody and pop-culture savvy. Throughout, a young Australian team enjoyed affectionately mocking American society, its

DESTROY MORE HUMANS!

CRYPTO'S POPULARITY SPAWNED ANOTHER THREE GAMES

DESTROY ALL HUMANS! 2

In 1969, a decade on from seizing control of the United States, the second instalment of *DAH!* goes global, with missions in fictional versions of London, Tokyo and Siberia. Following Crypto's death, his clone has stepped up. After the KGB destroys the Furon mothership, Cryptosporidium-138 seeks retribution and to foil Soviet plans for world domination. A co-op multiplayer mode was introduced, alongside new weapons and abilities.

DESTROY ALL HUMANS! BIG WILLY UNLEASHED

The first of two games made without Pandemic's input saw a considerable decline in quality. After PS2 and PSP versions were abandoned, this was released exclusively on Nintendo's Wii in 2008. Crypto must conceal the truth about the Big Willy fast-food chain, which is used to dispose of the dead bodies he's responsible for. To do so, he defeats Colonel Kluckin, a parody of KFC's Colonel Sanders.

DESTROY ALL HUMANS! PATH OF THE FURON

Developed by Sandblast Games, this Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3 release was panned by critics, cementing the demise of the *DAH!* series. *Path Of The Furon* had plenty of missions, sidequests and minigames, but it was deemed repetitive, poorly designed and glitchy. Racially insensitive stereotypes abound as Cryptosporidium-139 stops The Master's plot to take over from Emperor Meningitis.

omnipotent self-image and predictable cinematic tropes. They created a world where hidden conspiracies lurked beneath the shiny façade of big cars, fast food, drive-in movies, celebrity worship and tabloid media. "In sci-fi, aliens aren't invading Sydney! It's America and the rest of the world just doesn't exist," laughs Dan. "Comedy in games is depressingly rare as time goes on. I think the tone is also a product of it being built in Australia. We have a larrikin culture of trying to make other people laugh.

"Our struggle on the comedy side was just having faith in ourselves. You write a joke and then you have to hear it over and over again for the next two or three years. You're like, 'Is this even funny anymore?' I felt like I was in a fugue state every time I had to play the first five minutes of the game. Then you'd put it in front of someone else and they'd be cracking up."

Although generally successful, the humour didn't always hit the mark. Often silly and immature, some jokes, especially those concerning Miss Rockwell, were uncomfortably crude and have aged poorly. It was notable that the 2020 remaster of *DAH!* included a self-aware disclaimer at the start, emphasising that the original game had been modernised, but the content remained the same.

Throughout his invasion, Crypto often favours blunt force, but mind control, speed and stealth are sometimes required to achieve his aims as Pandemic attempted to balance out the rampant destruction and make *DAH!* more rounded. There are no checkpoints within missions, so failure means starting over again, which isn't a problem until the game's final stages when the difficulty level notably increases.

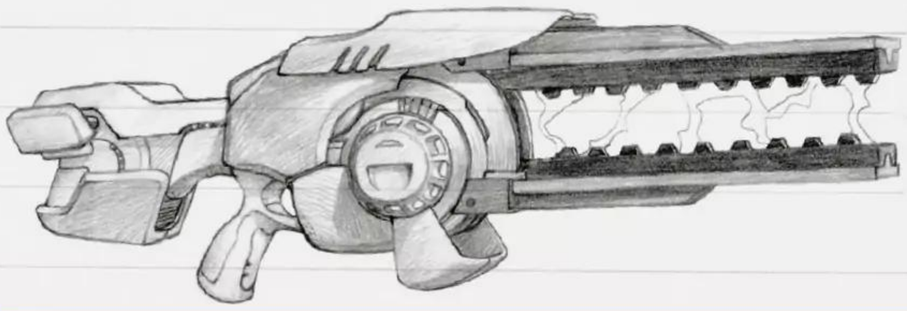
For the most part, *DAH!* isn't particularly challenging, with simple goals and forgiving combat sequences. As Dan acknowledges, the team wanted to create a fun and memorable experience above all else. It was about the joy of being Crypto – the freedom to explore unique environments and cause random chaos. The ragdoll effect of the Havok physics engine made blowing up enemies or flinging radioactive cows around feel immensely satisfying.

With upgrades available as the story progresses, Crypto gains access to an entertaining array of weapons (the Zap-O-Matic, Anal Probe, Disintegrator Ray and Ion Detonator). His flying saucer boasts several more – the Death Ray, Abducto Beam, Quantum Deconstructor, and Sonic Boom – each serving different purposes.

He also has a jetpack to travel over shorter distances and psychokinetic abilities to imitate human appearance, read minds or move objects. Overpowered as Crypto may be for some early missions, the sheer ingenuity and fun factor is worth it.

Lumbered with 'stone tools' compared to today's technology, Lachlan recalls

» [PlayStation 2] Attacking Rockwell police officers with the Zap-O-Matic is very satisfying.



» [PlayStation 2] Crypto is on the rampage here, gleefully blowing up Majestic cars with his Ion Detonator.

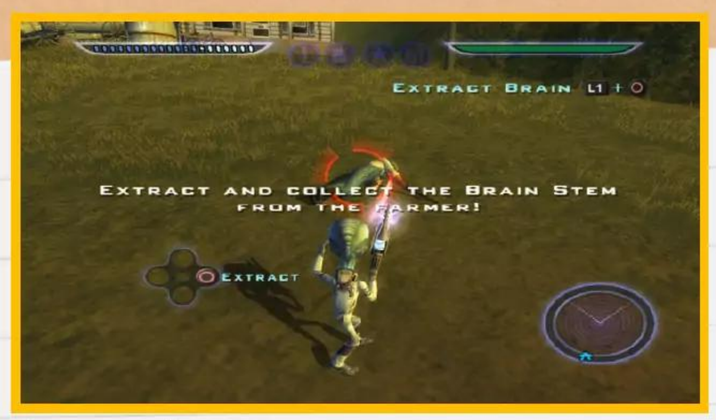
» [PlayStation 2] Crypto is causing huge amount of carnage in Santa Modesta with his trusty Quantum Deconstructor.

CRYPTO'S SECOND COMING

BLACK FOREST GAMES BRINGS DAH! BACK TO LIFE

After THQ went bankrupt, Nordic Games (later THQ Nordic) picked up the rights to *DAH!*, among other IPs, for just under $5 million. Despite the high-profile failures of *Big Willy Unleashed* and *Path Of The Furon*, players retained a deep affection for the franchise's silliness and creativity, with many calling for Crypto's return.

In 2020, Black Forest Games released a long-awaited reboot of the original *DAH!*, with the sequel following two years later. Both performed well, exceeding expectations, as they provided a welcome hit of nostalgia for old fans and introduced Crypto to a new generation on more advanced consoles. Beyond much-improved graphics, differences in storyline and gameplay were minimal. "It's always hard seeing your babies go. It's weird seeing someone else do a take on something that you lived for three years," says Dan Teasdale. "I think they did a great job. I'm glad it exists and people can still play it. To see it remastered so faithfully was really nice and really surreal."



» [PlayStation 2] Here Crypto extracts a farmer's brain stem so he can collect the precious Furon DNA.

» [PlayStation 2] Crypto looms over a defeated Silhouette in the final cutscene.

Pandemic's improvisational approach to cramming so many elements into the game. "With a small team and a tight schedule, there'd be a bunch of things that would crop up and it was like, 'Well, who's doing that? I guess I'm doing that.' All the programmers had to be supremely capable. Eric Smolikowski was a bit of a genius for setting up the animation system. "When you're surrounded by people who are good at their jobs, there's no embitterment about anyone not pulling their weight, although there was one infamous funny guy who'd fall asleep through the day. When he was starting at the place, he was told that if you're the last one to leave, just turn the lights out. He flicked the switch on the servers!"

After overcoming so many obstacles to make it this far, E3 2004 was a major turning point. Putting together the demo, and seeing how it was received, crystallised the team's sense of what *DAH!* should be. It attracted serious attention and was nominated for Best Original Game in the Game Critics Awards. Suddenly, the pressure was on to meet rising expectations.

"Going from four of us on a couch throwing around dumb ideas to walking into E3 and having a huge theatre recreated in the middle of South Hall with Crypto standing on top of it was like, 'Holy shit! What is going on? This is wild!' Seeing people excited about it and lining up to see the booth demo was incredible," says Dan.

Lachlan felt a mix of emotions. "If you bombed at E3, your forecasted sales were screwed, so you had to do well. We survived that and generated a lot of interest because our game was different. Once we'd got past that, it was semi-relief, like, 'OK, it's on.' But it was also like, 'Oh, fuck, we've got to make the rest of this now.' Getting good feedback is like the point of no return."

For the next year, the Australian team were overwhelmed with work as they battled to get *DAH!* out the door. Towards the end, extra

THE PANDEMIC SPREADS

THE STUDIO'S 11-YEAR RUN PRODUCED SOME NOTABLE SUCCESSES

FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR

■ A real-time tactics game where players lead an American invasion of the fictional Zekistan, following a series of terrorist attacks. Critically acclaimed, there was controversy surrounding its development as a training tool for the US army, which invested in the project.

STAR WARS: BATTLEFRONT

■ The first instalment of this popular and highly regarded series sold more than four million copies. It's a first and third-person shooter that combined impressive visuals, versatile gameplay and fidelity to the source material. Players experience iconic settings and battles from the original and prequel trilogies.

MERCENARIES: PLAYGROUND OF DESTRUCTION

■ Play as a hired gun drafted in to help prevent nuclear war breaking out in North Korea. You are free to explore a vast open-world environment and carry out missions for different factions, earning money and affecting your reputation. A favourite for the PS2 and Xbox.

THE SABOTEUR

■ Famed for its striking use of colour, this action adventure game was Pandemic's final release before being closed by EA in December 2009. You take on the role of Irish race-car driver Sean Devlin, who joins the French resistance to help liberate Paris from Nazi control.

staff had to be drafted in from LA. "It was brutal. It broke relationships. There were cases where it was too much. People just disappeared and we never saw them again. We were all in our 20s so we put our lives on hold for a year and broke ourselves making this game," says Dan. "It's hard thinking about that sometimes. You're young with no attachments, and you're so invested in this thing that you just want to get it out. It comes down to this very existential thing of like, 'Why do we make games?' The reason I make games is because I want to make people happy and put joy into the world. If that's what we've done, then it wasn't for nothing."

> "I HAVE RANDOMLY BUMPED INTO PEOPLE IN THE LAST COUPLE OF YEARS WHO JUST ADORED THE GAME. IT SOMEHOW MADE SUCH AN IMPACT ON THEIR LIVES"
> **LACHLAN CREAGH**

***DAH!* certainly delivered in that respect**. A short, fun and punchy game, the main story doesn't take long to finish, but players are encouraged to roam and complete additional challenges. There are brain stems to extract, probes to collect, rampages to carry out and internal thoughts to scan, revealing a wealth of subversive jokes. With the media's help, the government spin Crypto's destruction as freak accidents or the work of Communists.

Although Pandemic eschewed the dark realism of *GTA*, it did imitate its map style and alert system. As Crypto's activities draw more attention, he is pursued by escalating law enforcement agencies – the police, the army and the Majestic, a shadowy FBI-style organisation overseen by Silhouette, his ultimate adversary. *DAH!* ends with the Furons having conquered America as the rest of the world awaits, lining up the sequel.

The game received broadly positive reviews, averaging 76 on Metacritic for the Xbox, and sold more than one million copies in its first year. While it wasn't to everyone's tastes, with some complaints about frustrating stealth missions and the arbitrary restrictions of its open-world environment, its sheer boldness made a strong and lasting impression.

After leaving Pandemic, Dan enjoyed huge commercial success with *Rock Band*, but found that it's rare to provoke the same instinctive affection that Crypto's first adventure did. "It landed in a way that I don't think we really expected. Every day I'm still seeing people resonating with it and loving it."

Still living in Australia, Lachlan has had similar experiences, demonstrating *DAH!*'s endurance and global reach. "I have randomly bumped into people in the last couple of years who just adored the game. It somehow made such an impact on their lives. For a while, you felt like a bit of a worker termite completing it, but at least the days and nights you spent working late were time well spent." ✱

» [PlayStation 2] Preparing to assassinate the president during a televised speech.

Hardware Heaven

PlayStation 3 (CECH-2000 series)

» **MANUFACTURER:** Sony » **YEAR:** 2009 » **COST:** £249.99 (launch), £50+ (today, boxed), £30+ (today, unboxed)

The original PlayStation 3 was not Sony's finest console design, even if you don't mind its resemblance to a George Foreman grill. Despite its high retail price, Sony lost plenty of money on early hardware sales because it was complex and expensive to manufacture. A combination of feature cuts and manufacturing process improvements drove those costs down though, and the culmination of these efforts was the introduction of a redesigned model, known colloquially as the PlayStation 3 Slim.

The new machine retained all of the key features of the previous model, but its exterior featured softer curves and textured matte plastic, rather than the glossy finish of the original. The machine was introduced with a 120GB hard disk in September 2009. A 250GB option followed a month later, and 160GB and 320GB models replaced them the following summer. However, the lower price was the key attraction for players still dealing with the repercussions of the global recession of 2007-2009, and helped to boost PS3 sales at a time when people were cutting back on leisure spending.

SUPPLIED BY
EVAN AMOS

PlayStation 3 CECH-2000 fact

■ Sony chose the introduction of the slim hardware as an opportunity to rebrand the PlayStation 3 as a whole, with a new logo and redesigned game packaging.

MEMORY: 256 MB XDR DRAM MAIN, 256MB GDDR3 RAM VIDEO

OPERATING SYSTEM: CUSTOM PS3 SYSTEM SOFTWARE

GRAPHICS: SONY/NVIDIA RSX "REALITY SYNTHESIZER" (500 MHZ)

PROCESSOR: STI CELL 64-BIT CPU (3.2 GHZ)

MEDIA: BLU-RAY DISC, DVD, CD-ROM

STORAGE: USER REPLACEABLE HARD DISK (120GB – 320GB DEPENDING ON MODEL)

ESSENTIAL GAME

MotorStorm: Pacific Rift

Many of the greatest games of the PS3 era have made their way to newer platforms, but this cracking arcade racer somehow remains tethered to its platform of origin. Like the first game, *MotorStorm: Pacific Rift* pits vehicles of all shapes and sizes against one another in rowdy races, but the new setting offers more beautiful and varied scenery, and your Boost Gauge can be affected by hot and cold conditions on the track. Better yet, local multiplayer has been added, supporting up to four players in split-screen action.

DYLAN CUTHBERT

From hacking his way into a contract with Nintendo, to late-night snack runs for Shigeru Miyamoto, Dylan Cuthbert chats with us about his 30+ years in the games industry and the reality of running an independent studio today

Words by James Tocchio

Dylan Cuthbert hit the ground running. At age 18, he and others at Argonaut Software successfully defeated the Nintendo Game Boy's copyright protection mechanism and created a 3D tech demo for the nascent handheld. Weeks later, Nintendo flew him to its Kyoto HQ for a meeting and a contract that would soon have him working shoulder to shoulder with Nintendo legends like Shigeru Miyamoto, creating such iconic games as *Star Fox*. Over the last 30 years he has been a programmer, director, executive producer and CEO of his own studio, Q-Games. With a new game, *Dreams Of Another* just announced, Dylan has no plans of slowing down.

The story of how you broke into the game industry is legendary; it goes that hacking a Game Boy won you a meeting at Nintendo HQ, and a contract! Can you share your memories of this time?

I saw an ad in the back of a magazine for a job at Argonaut Software while I was still at school. I applied for that, quit school and began working there. One of the first things I worked on was a Z80 emulator that ran on the Amiga, which I knocked up to emulate what we imagined the Game Boy's architecture was like. It wasn't too far wrong and gave us a head start when we began hacking the real hardware to load up our programs.

I developed a small 3D demo called *Eclipse* which got shown to Nintendo during CES in Vegas. Two weeks later I was flown over to Nintendo HQ in Kyoto with Jez [San], my boss, to show what we'd done. They liked what they saw and signed a deal to develop the demo into a full game in collaboration with them. To get 3D up and running on such a system I drew upon my experience programming the ZX Spectrum while I was at school.

You have worked with legends in the games industry, such as Shigeru Miyamoto, Yoshio Sakamoto, Gunpei Yokoi (the inventor of the Game Boy), and many others. How has collaborating with such accomplished people influenced the way you make games, and can you think of a particular lesson learned from them that you've carried with you through your career?

Miyamoto, Sakamoto, 'Hip' Tanaka (now nicknamed 'Chip' Tanaka), Yokoi, Izushi, Totaka (Totakeke), were all instrumental in my early years and I really enjoyed working with them. They helped settle me into the Nintendo way of making games, which was very different to the way in the UK at the time. The games industry in the UK was still very much a bedroom industry, but here was Nintendo HQ, where they had a large complex of buildings and lots of busy people bustling around. The scale was incredibly different. Sakamoto helped me understand that we shouldn't make games too hard, since not everyone was as hardcore a gamer as we were. Miyamoto taught me how to re-analyse a feature, and to remove it if it doesn't fit. No matter how much you are attached to an idea, you need to let it go and move on if it just isn't working.

The Nintendo composer Kazumi Totaka, who created the soundtracks for such games as *WaveRace 64*, *Animal Crossing* and *Wii Sports*, has hidden into each of his games an infamous tune called *Totaka's Song* and the first appearance of this song was in your Game Boy game *X*. Did you know about this when the game was released?

I knew about the hidden song and secret area of the game of course (I programmed it), but I don't think even he realised that this would be a running meme in his games, because it was the first. It was just a fun little melody he had knocking around and we had a fun little secret we needed something for.

Have you hidden anything into your own games over the years, like *Totaka's Song*? Is there a Cuthbert signature that has yet to be discovered?

In *X* I included a cheat code, it's not really a signature, I simply formed the word ST-A-R-B-U-R-ST from the keys of the Game Boy, and if you type that while you are in the pause screen it will jump you to the end credit sequence

> “Miyamoto taught me how to reanalyse a feature, and to remove it if it doesn’t fit”
>
> Dylan Cuthbert

SELECTED TIMELINE

- **STARGLIDER II** [1989] DOS
- **X** [1992] GAME BOY
- **STAR FOX** [1993] SNES
- **VORTEX** [1994] SNES
- **BLASTO** [1997] PLAYSTATION
- **DIGIDRIVE** [2006] GBA
- **STAR FOX COMMAND** [2006] NINTENDO DS
- **PIXELJUNK SHOOTER** [2009] PLAYSTATION 3
- **X-SCAPE** [2010] NINTENDO DSI
- **STAR FOX 64 3D** [2011] NINTENDO 3DS
- **PIXELJUNK SHOOTER 2** [2011] PLAYSTATION 3
- **PIXELJUNK NOM NOM GALAXY** [2015] PLAYSTATION 4
- **THE TOMORROW CHILDREN** [2016] PLAYSTATION 4
- **PIXELJUNK VR DEAD HUNGRY** [2016] PC
- **STAR FOX 2** [2017] SNES CLASSIC EDITION HARDWARE
- **PIXELJUNK MONSTERS 2** [2018] PC
- **PIXELJUNK EDEN 2** [2020] SWITCH
- **PIXELJUNK RAIDERS** [2021] STADIA
- **THE TOMORROW CHILDREN: PHOENIX EDITION** [2022] PLAYSTATION 4
- **PIXELJUNK SCRAPPERS DELUXE** [2023] PC

» [SNES] A brief and tantalizing view of an Arwing cockpit as seen in *Star Fox*.

» [Game Boy] *X* was a fantastic calling card for Dylan and led to working on *Star Fox* with Nintendo.

» [SNES] The graphics in the temporarily unreleased *Star Fox 2* made major leaps over the first *Star Fox*.

» [SNES] *Star Fox 2* differed wildly from its predecessor, going so far as to include a bipedal tank.

of the game (which has another great soundtrack by Totaka).

What is your most prominent memory of creating *Star Fox* with Argonaut and the people at Nintendo?
Going for McVitie's chocolate biscuits at the local convenience store at 3am is one of my best memories. The schedule was tight, and we were waiting for final bug reports. Miyamoto and everyone else were there, and Miyamoto had a hankering for his favourite student-era snack, which happened to be McVitie's chocolate biscuits, which were sold in Japan back then. Sadly, you can't find them here anymore.

We recently interviewed Giles Goddard for Retro Gamer 266, where we discussed 1994's *Stunt Race FX*. At that time, you were working on *Star Fox 2* weren't you?
I was working on *Star Fox 2* during that period. To help teach the staff at Nintendo more about 3D, we split the team into two and added a few Japanese programmers. Giles was working in a little area adjacent to the *Star Fox* one.

***Star Fox 2* was infamously cancelled in 1995, despite being complete. Was it disappointing to have worked on such a big game only for it to be locked away in Nintendo's vault? And did you have any thoughts or feelings when the game was finally released with the SNES Mini hardware in 2017?**
Yes, although I was ready for a new adventure at that point, so it didn't phase me too much. I do wish it had been released but at the same time, the PlayStation had just launched and was obviously far superior at 3D graphics, so I wouldn't have liked our game to be compared to that. I was very happy the game did finally get released!

After your time at Nintendo, you moved to work with Sony. What was that like?
I joined PlayStation in the USA just a few months after the PlayStation had launched there and began working on *Captain Blasto* which eventually became simply *Blasto*. That was quite a cultural difference to the UK and Japan, and I enjoyed American life immensely. I did find that the hours were much longer and harder than Nintendo's, with a lot more pressure on milestone dates. Nintendo didn't set dates until a game felt like

» Though a full *PixelJunk* collection is not available on physical media, *Monsters Deluxe* is, and it's worth collecting.

it was ready, which led to more creativity and experimentation.

Do you have any interesting memories around your time working on *Blasto*, a somewhat overlooked action platformer which featured the voice talents of the late Phil Hartman?
The team, a mix of Brits and Americans, was a blast. We all had very strong personalities so there were a lot of clashes, but at the same time, we were all young and that's the kind of thing that keeps you on your toes, and even with tight schedules we pulled out all the stops to be as creative as possible. *Blasto* was a great 3D engine, with even individual polygons in the world having little scripted programs attached to them. The PlayStation was a fun machine to develop for.

After working at Sony, you moved back to Japan and founded Q-Games in 2001. What was it like to go independent at that time?
Since I was a kid, I had always wanted to make my own games studio. It was like a standard dream for bedroom coders in the early Eighties, and one I managed to realise. The PlayStation 2 had just come out and I had just released a game for it (*Ape Escape*, 2001) and I was ready to move back to Kyoto. At the time I had built up quite a name for myself within PlayStation so I decided it would be the right time to take the gamble. I took my idea to Akira Sato, one of the VPs, and he encouraged me and even set up an initial R&D contract to get us going (something I hadn't asked for).

One of the first games that Q-Games developed was *Star Fox Command*, and later you directed *Star Fox 64 3D*. What was it like to shift from a programmer on the first game, to director?
Nintendo approached us after we had taken a few ideas for different games to them a year or two earlier, even developing one of them, called *Digidrive*. They felt we were just about the right size (15 people) to take on something like a mobile version of *Star Fox*, especially considering my involvement in the first two instalments. I enjoyed being the director, and working with [Takaya] Imamura in the role of producer was a great experience. The experimentation and brainstorming were a lot of fun. *Star Fox 64 3D* was a great project, I hesitate to call it a port because we had to rework it a lot, remodelling and retexturing the entire game in the process.

> "Since I was a kid, I had always wanted to make my own games studio. It was like a standard dream for bedroom coders in the early Eighties, and one I managed to realise"
> Dylan Cuthbert

Let's talk about *PixelJunk*. The series began with *PixelJunk Racers*, followed by the amazing tower defence game *PixelJunk Monsters*, then *Eden*, *Shooter*, *SideScroller* and *4am*. Each of these games is like a unique experiment.
We were working behind the scenes on the PS3, developing the XMB interface and the music visualisers, when there was mention that there would be an online store where people could buy games that were download-only and that this would open the doors for smaller companies like Q to develop and publish their own games on the platform. We signed up immediately, and because the PS3 was the first system that supported 1080p HDMI output I decided to revisit 2D gaming and pull upon my memories from childhood, but this time with a full range of colours and high resolution. That's why 'HD' is hidden in the *PixelJunk* logo.

***PixelJunk Eden* struck a chord with us. The blend of music and visuals, and its simple but meditative game design reminds us of such games as *Rez* and *Lumines*. How did *Eden* come to be; how did you end up working with Tomohisa 'Baiyon' Kuramitsu?**
From the beginning of the series I planned that the third title should be 'artsy fartsy' in some way, more of an experimental title,

CRAFTED BY CUTHBERT

Here's a small selection of Dylan's games

X

■ As a game designer, Dylan's first big project was *X*, a vehicular combat game for the Game Boy which was one of the very few Game Boy games to feature a 3D engine. It's a remarkable game which, sadly, never released outside of Japan.

STAR FOX

■ After *X*, Dylan and his Argonaut Software colleagues were tapped by Nintendo to create a more advanced vehicular combat game for the SNES. They designed the FX Chip RISC processor and one of the system's few 3D polygonal games – *Star Fox*.

STAR FOX 2

■ Infamously cancelled in 1995 despite being a complete game. Nintendo feared that the game wouldn't compete well against the then new PlayStation. It was finally released in 2017, however, and it's a lovely addition to the franchise.

BLASTO

■ Dylan moved to the USA around the time of the launch of the PlayStation and worked with Sony to develop *Blasto*, a character platformer featuring a blustering space hero with plenty of guns, with the iconic Phil Hartman as the voice of Blasto.

PIXELJUNK MONSTERS

■ In 2008 Q-Games released *PixelJunk Monsters*, one of the best tower defence games. The now-retired president of Sony Interactive Entertainment, Shuhei Yoshida, recently named *PixelJunk Monsters* as his favourite PSP game of all time! High praise indeed.

X MARKS THE SPOT

Revisiting Dylan's pioneering Game Boy game

■ In 1992, the Nintendo Game Boy was a runaway success, and the most popular handheld gaming device in the world. The only people who did not want a Game Boy were those who already had one. A product of the 8-bit era, the system's catalogue leaned heavily on sprite-based 2D visuals, but Dylan Cuthbert and his colleagues at Argonaut Software thought the Game Boy could do more. The game they came up with, *X*, delivered 3D wireframe graphics on hardware that frankly had no business rendering them.

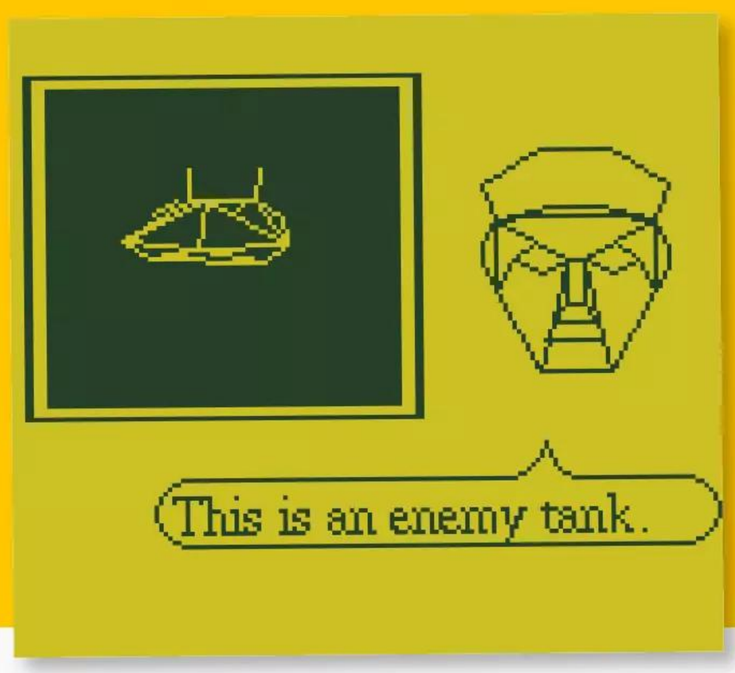
At its heart, *X* is a first-person vehicular combat game. The player pilots a starship-like vehicle through a series of missions across a sprawling map, and each mission has its own set of objectives. These range from protecting a base from enemy fire, shooting down formations of enemies, and delivering cargo loads to certain areas of the planet.

The technical wizardry behind *X* is astounding. Dylan, who designed and programmed the game, had been stepping in the world of 3D rendering since his earliest days at Argonaut. He worked on *Starglider II*, the 3D space combat game for the Amiga, Atari ST, DOS, ZX Spectrum and Mac that helped Argonaut convince Nintendo to make *Star Fox*. But the Game Boy's meager 8-bit, 4MHz CPU and limited RAM posed the greatest challenge yet.

Despite the limitations, *X* runs well and offers one of the only 3D experiences on the system, and yet the game is mostly forgotten outside of Japan, where it was never officially released. (Nintendo Of America considered it a poor fit for the 'kid focussed' handheld.)

Years later, Dylan would revisit *X* in the shape of *X-Scape*, a 2010 DSiWare sequel which shared the original's sense of ambition and innovation. In this game, the player controls the ship with a combination of the DSi's physical controls and the touch-screen. The pace is faster and more fluid than in the original, but the DNA of *X* is still at the core of the experience.

Today, *X* remains an under-appreciated game. While its gameplay is unlikely to hold the attention of a modern audience for its entire ten levels, it deserves attention if only for its place as a pioneering 3D handheld experience.



» [PlayStation] *Blasto* is an interesting experiment that mixes running and gunning around 3D spaces to decent effect.

> "It was frustrating to have a game that many people had enjoyed, and for which the average playtime was in the hundreds of hours for, just removed like that"
> Dylan Cuthbert

and I was looking for a local artist who might be interested in collaborating. Some friends mentioned that there was a local DJ who was an artist and interested in getting into the games industry. I met him by accident at a Christmas party, realised he was the guy who some people had mentioned, and asked him to bring in his art so we could look at it. He brought in a bunch of crazy-looking art, and something about one piece which looked like ink dripped plants caught my imagination – it reminded me of an old ZX Spectrum game I loved called *Bugaboo The Flea*. This got me thinking about how that game could be melded with modern-looking art and *PixelJunk Eden* was born. Baiyon was a musician too, so it really helped cement the whole mix of art, music and gameplay together.

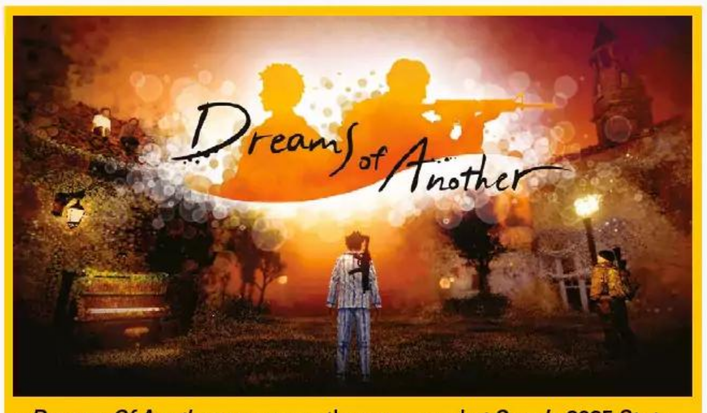
What is the future of the *PixelJunk* series?
We have a brand-new *PixelJunk* title we will be announcing very soon, directed by Baiyon, but nothing like *PixelJunk Eden*. Keep an eye out for that!

What has it been like to live and work in Japan for so long?
I'm still loving it. I did enjoy my time in the USA, but nothing beats Kyoto. It has such an eclectic mix of ancient and modern, classic and contemporary. It also has incredible food, and quite a cosmopolitan feel. It's larger in population than Manchester yet still maintains a tight, smaller town feel because of its density and because of the mountains and rivers that are nearby.

What is it like to work at Q-Games? Do you have any advice for people who want to work in games development?
At Q you need to be willing to brainstorm and collaborate in sometimes painful ways, this all goes back to the Miyamoto method of game design. Sometimes we need to rework ideas completely if they aren't working. This is seen as part of the process here and it can be very different at other companies. When we develop a feature for a game, we take a hard critical look at it and give it a thorough test, and if it doesn't click, we rework it. My motto is 'if something needs to be done, something needs to be done' and excuses don't cut it, because as Miyamoto is famously quoted as saying, "A delayed game is eventually good, but a rushed game is forever bad."

You have a Special Thanks credit from Fumito Ueda on *The Last Guardian*. Can you tell us if you had any involvement in creating that game?
No, but I have always been friends with Ueda, ever since he showed me his first demo of *Ico* on the PlayStation 1. We sometimes meet and discuss things.

In 2021, Sony closed Japan Studio, which created some of the company's best-loved



» *Dreams Of Another* was recently announced at Sony's 2025 State Of Play event and is due to be released on both the PS4 and PS5.

» [PlayStation 3] The *PixelJunk* series includes *Eden 2*, a stylish and meditative experience.

» [DS] *Star Fox Command*, which is part strategy, part flight combat, implemented an unusual control scheme.

experimental games for nearly 30 years (*Patapon, Puppeteer, LocoRoco, Gravity Rush, EchoChrome* and many more). Is there less appetite for smaller scale games within the big companies these days? What does this mean for the games industry?
I think this was a huge mistake by PlayStation, as it is this exact genre of games that brings in new gamers, and it's this genre that's missing. The success of a game like *Astro Bot* shows that games that experiment can do well, and some of the games you've mentioned were huge hits, such as *LocoRoco*. By closing Japan studio, they have lost a generation of Japanese developers.

In 2016, you directed *The Tomorrow Children*, which we feel was under-appreciated at the time. Can you discuss the development of this game? The visuals are stunning, and we know that a lot of technology went into creating this title.
We developed our own 3D engine from scratch for this title as we wanted to utilise the full Compute power of the PS4. We took renders from a tool called Octane Render that would take 10-20 seconds to complete, looked at them, and tried to work out ways we could get a similar look, but at a proper framerate. We came across a technology called Cascaded Voxel Cone Ray Tracing in a little paper from Siggraph that looked like it had promise, even though no one had got it running faster than a few frames a second at that point. Over two years, we fleshed out that technology and got it performant, squeezing every single last cycle of power out of the Compute pipeline that we could find. It gave us effects such as multiple bounces of light, sub-surface scattering, reflections and semi-translucency, all with a dynamic world, not a static one. Because of this original technology, the game looks as great today as it did then.

In 2022, Q-Games secured the rights to *The Tomorrow Children* and re-released it. Was this a personal goal of yours?
Yes, I worked for years to get the IP back after the game was shut down many years ago. It was frustrating to have a game that many people had enjoyed, and for which the average playtime was in the hundreds of hours for, just removed like that.

You have been involved in the creation of 35+ games beginning in the Eighties. Since then, games have become more ambitious, immersive, and now incorporate technology which was the stuff of dreams when you began your career. If you could go back and remake any of your older games using today's technology, which would you choose?
The original *Star Fox* would be fun to go back to. Also, something like *PixelJunk Shooter* could be very interesting if revisited in 3D with 3D fluids, but right now games are very expensive to make, so we must balance funding with our lofty goals. Another one I would like to revisit is *PixelJunk 4am*, that was just a little too ahead of its time and because it used the PlayStation Move controller it was limited right from the get-go.

How do you feel about the future of games now, and what is next for you and Q-Games?
I think there is a bit of a tipping point happening – which you can see from the enormous number of layoffs in the West in the games industry. It is getting harder and harder to make a game that lifts its head above the sea of other games. I think people in the industry will need to get scrappier and hungrier and less complacent and learn how to push themselves to make something that truly stands out. Following Miyamoto's method can get you some of the way there, but we also need to search hard to find that spark of inspiration that gives us the next hit and ignites the audience again. ★

» [PlayStation 3] *PixelJunk Sidescroller* is an excellent arcade shooter with a retro-future graphical style.

» [PSP] Tower defence with a monstrous hand-drawn twist.

» [PlayStation 3] *PixelJunk Racers* is a frantic, top-down racing game, which old-school fans of *Micro Machines* should enjoy.

» [PlayStation 5] Directed by Dylan, *The Tomorrow Children* is a technical wonder that looks and plays like nothing else.

Q = QUALITY

Q-Games and the PixelJunk series

■ Dylan's company Q-Games has long focussed on creativity and innovation. The studio gained widespread recognition with the launch of the PS3 era *PixelJunk* series, a collection of downloadable games for the PlayStation 3 that began in 2007 with *PixelJunk Racers*.

Each title in the *PixelJunk* series explores totally different genres and gameplay mechanics from the other games in the series, showcasing the studio's versatility and commitment to unique gaming experiences.

Notable entries include *PixelJunk Monsters*, a tower defence game praised for its strategic depth, and *PixelJunk* Eden, a platformer recognised for its artistic design. Both titles were extremely well received, garnering sequels, and each holding aggregate review scores greater than 80/100.

We asked Dylan about the possibility that the *PixelJunk* series could be packaged and sold as a single physical release. "All the *PixelJunk* games' rights are held by Q-Games. I'm not sure we'd do a physical release now as some of the games are old, but I don't rule out returning to some of the entries in the series at some time in the future."

CHICAGO
FIRST ROUND

Virtua NBA

MISSING A LAYUP

RETROREVIVAL

» ARCADE » 1999 » SEGA R&D4

Back in the Nineties, the *Virtua* brand was built on AM2's breakthrough 3D interpretations of staple arcade genres including racing, fighting and lightgun shooting. While 3D visuals had been normalised by the end of the decade, there was still some value in the brand, as proven by the excellent *Virtua Tennis*. So when I saw *Virtua NBA* in my local Sega Park for the first time, I had extremely high hopes. It certainly looked the part, with its detailed players reflected in the shiny court surface – I'd honestly never seen such a spectacular-looking sports game.

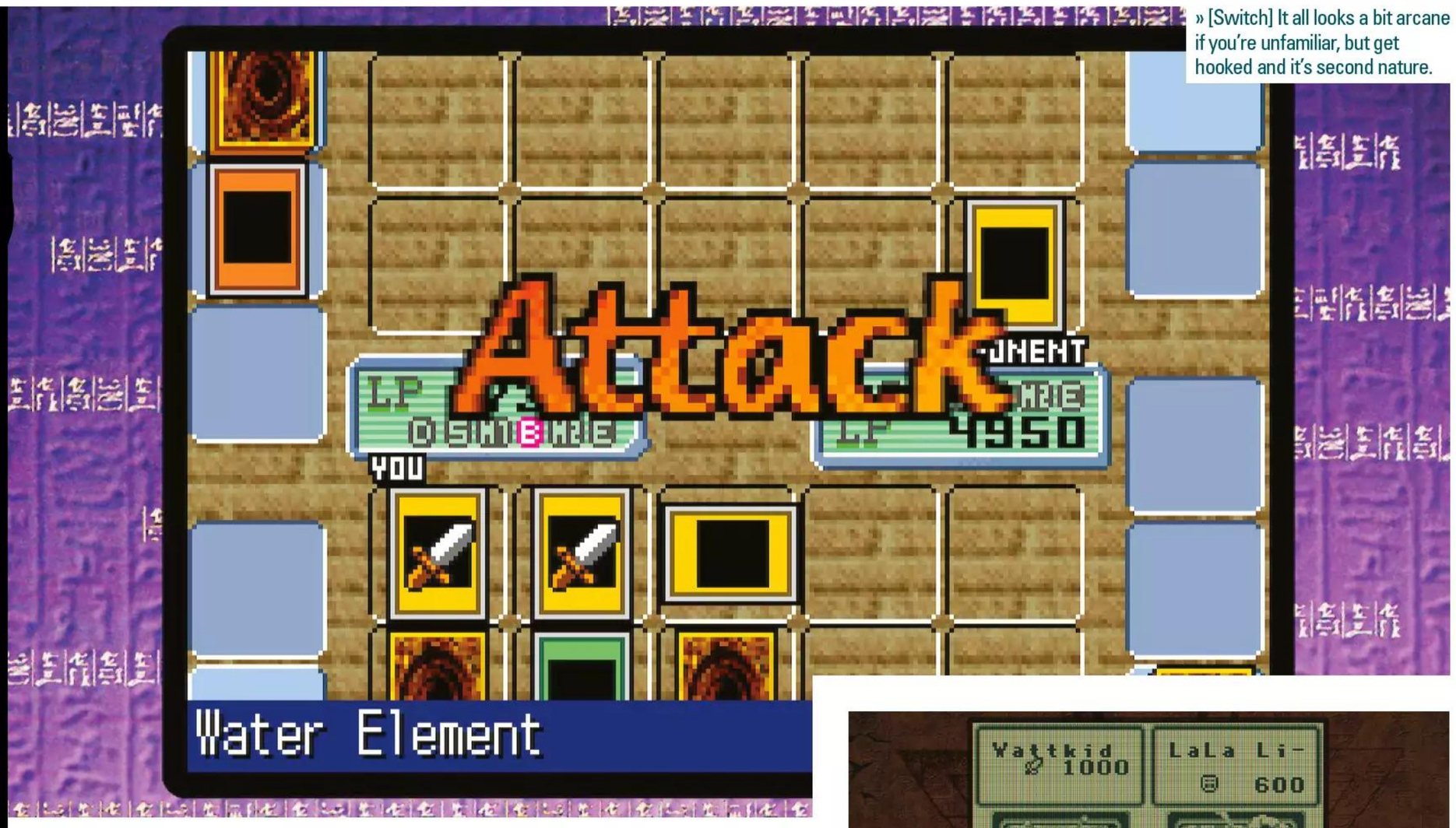
Of course, the game featured full teams of five rather than the reduced numbers seen in games like *NBA Jam* or *Street Hoop*, and it was a much more grounded take on basketball than previous arcade games I'd experienced. I didn't necessarily mind that, but what I didn't love was the way it controlled. The control scheme only uses two buttons so it's appropriately simple for the arcade environment, but responses to your inputs just feel painfully sluggish – it almost seems as though the high-quality animation is to blame, with lengthy start-up times for any kind of movement. The fact that it doesn't let you play a full four-quarter game by default is no fun either.

Virtua NBA runs on the Dreamcast-based NAOMI arcade board, and I've seen people complaining that they would have rather had a home conversion of *Virtua NBA* than the console's *NBA 2K* games, because they prefer arcade-style basketball to simulations. That may be the case, but there are already better options for players with those preferences – *NBA Showtime* and *NBA Hoopz* are the direct successors to the *NBA Jam* series, and they're just as much fun as you'd expect. Sega's game may be prettier than Midway's efforts, but unlike them, it's throwing up bricks all day long when it comes to gameplay. *

8.8
SHOT

DETROIT
10
10
104
COM
1P

» Duelling monsters and slinging spells is the order of the day, thanks to Konami's collection of Game Boy Yu-Gi-Oh! titles. If you've sworn off cardboard combat, you'll find more reviews including Xenoblade Chronicles X and the latest Evercade cart



» [Switch] It all looks a bit arcane if you're unfamiliar, but get hooked and it's second nature.

Yu-Gi-Oh!: Early Days Collection

WHERE IS THE SHADOW REALM, ANYWAY?

» [Switch] Cards clash in the very first game on the collection, a greyscale Game Boy outing.

INFORMATION

- **FORMAT REVIEWED:** SWITCH
- **OTHER FORMATS:** PC
- **RELEASED:** £54.99
- **PUBLISHER:** KONAMI
- **DEVELOPER:** DIGITAL ECLIPSE
- **BUY IT FROM:** ONLINE, RETAIL
- **PLAYERS:** 1

The *Yu-Gi-Oh!* series has been a mainstay of the trading card game scene for over 25 years now, and that's an impressive feat. Although it's not technically an original property, being a spin-off of the manga of the same name, we've seen the likes of *X-Men*, *Harry Potter* and *WWE* games all come and go while Konami's game has remained consistently popular. Videogame representations of the card game have also been very popular over the years, and Konami has seen fit to jam 14 of them into this new collection.

The *Yu-Gi-Oh!: Early Days Collection* concentrates specifically on the games that originally released on Nintendo's Game Boy consoles, starting with the monochrome Game Boy game *Yu-Gi-Oh! Duel Monsters* from 1998 and finishing with the Game Boy Advance release *Yu-Gi-Oh! 7 Trials To Glory: World Championship Tournament 2005* from 2004. Most of them are card battle games, but there's some variety in the form of the strategy game *Monster Capsule*, and board game variants *Dungeon Dice Monsters* and *Destiny Board Traveler*.

Notably, a number of the earlier games in the series were never initially released in English, and all but *Yu-Gi-Oh! Duel Monsters 6: Expert 2* have been translated here. That game is really featured for the sake of completeness anyway, since an updated and translated version is also included.

» [Switch] Unfortunately, few of the games have RPG-style stories to get stuck into.

BRIEF HISTORY

» The *Yu-Gi-Oh!* trading card game began as just one element of Kazuki Takahashi's manga about a teenage boy who becomes possessed by a spirit who loves to gamble, but soon came to define the series. The videogame incarnations of the card game actually predate the tabletop game, which is also published by Konami, and initially followed a simplified set of rules before moving closer to the tabletop game. Early games in the series also appeared on the PlayStation, PS2, GameCube and more, and many of them are million-sellers.

✱ PICKS OF THE MONTH

DARRAN

Suikoden I & II Remaster: Gate Rune And Dunan Unification

I've waited years to play these games and they don't disappoint. What a pity the quality-of life extras aren't as good.

NICK

Xenoblade Chronicles X: Definitive Edition

I bought the Wii U version because I was convinced that this was never coming to Switch. Now you can see what you were missing out on.

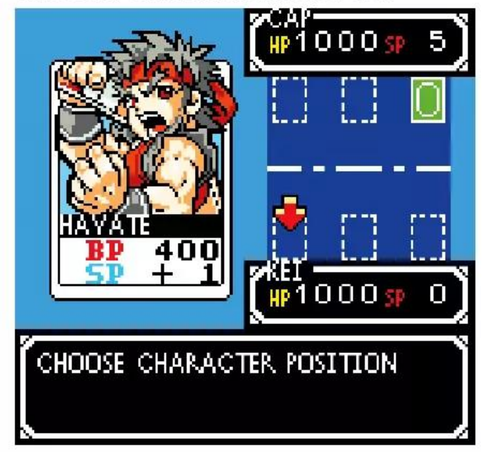
Octoberser
ATK 1600 DEF 1400
Octoberser
Aqua
With the head of a fish and the legs of an octopus, this strange creature attacks enemies by flinging spears.

» [Switch] The LCD simulation here is pretty good for all of the games on the collection.

✱ WHY NOT TRY

▼ SOMETHING OLD

SNK VS CAPCOM: CARD FIGHTERS CLASH



▼ SOMETHING NEW

SHADOWVERSE: CHAMPION'S BATTLE

We would imagine that plenty of the development budget was spent on doing this, and as such other features are thin on the ground, so it's worth reining in your expectations if you've seen the name Digital Eclipse and started to get excited about a Gold Master-style exploration of *Yu-Gi-Oh!* history.

The emulation is just as solid as you'd hope and you do get a number of bonus features. You can save and load each game at any point and rewind up to 60 seconds of gameplay if you make a mistake, and a nice little selection of display filters are included too. More game-specific tweaks are available via an Enhancements menu, through which it's possible to unlock extra cards and get around all kinds of limitations on deck building. Better yet, *Yu-Gi-Oh! Duel Monsters 4: Battle Of Great Duelists* has online play – it's said that other games will get it later too.

Full digital manuals are available for every game, and you're going to need them if you're not familiar with the gameplay of *Yu-Gi-Oh!* because the games waste absolutely no time on tutorials. If you jump in head-first without learning what to do, you'll find yourself on the receiving end of a beating pretty quickly and it can be quite bewildering – not only because the rules will seem somewhat arcane, but also because the original interfaces were designed for the limitations of those old handhelds and can be a little clunky as a result.

Once you do take the time to read up on what you're supposed to be doing, the appeal of the card game does come through. You'll soon come to learn when it's time to use one of your monsters as tribute to summon better ones, and there's a great satisfaction to be had when you blow out an opponent with the timely use of a trap card. If you avoid the temptation to unlock all the cards straight away, the process of winning battles, getting new cards and building a monstrously powerful deck can keep you hooked for hours.

But for as much as *Yu-Gi-Oh!: Early Days Collection* does right, it's tough to recommend to anyone but the most committed of fanatics at present. If you're curious about the series and interested in dabbling with it, this collection would probably serve you quite well – but £55 is a high price for a quick dabble. The package of 14 games is substantial, but with so many being so similar to one another, the long-term appeal of the collection has to be called into question too.

If you're the kind of player who saw that the physical edition of the game comes with a limited-edition card, and has fond memories of spending countless hours with one of the games on the collection in their youth, you've probably already placed your order, and more power to you. For everyone else, it's totally possible to have great fun with what is ultimately a well-made compilation, but we'd advise you to wait for a discount before taking the plunge. ✱

In a nutshell

The "heart of the cards" may beat strong, but the wallet of the player is battered. This compilation offers plenty of great card battling and the work to translate many previously Japan-only games is to be commended, but it's a hard sell at this price.

» Score **72%**

» [Switch] Being able to switch between regional versions of the games is a nice touch.

» [Switch] The addition of a few spin-off games helps add some welcome variety to the collection.

» [Switch] Turn-based strategy is the order of the day in *Monster Capsule*.

RETRO ROUNDUP

WE LOOK AT THE LATEST RETRO-RELATED RELEASES

★ PICK OF THE MONTH

Suikoden I & II HD Remaster: Gate Rune And Dunan Unification

» **System:** PC (version tested), PS4, PS5, Switch, Xbox One, Xbox Series S/X » **Buy it for:** £44.99 » **Buy it from:** Online, retail

It cannot be stressed just how good *Suikoden* and *Suikoden II* are to experience, whether you're playing them for the first time or are long-term fans who just want to enjoy the games again. Loosely based on the Chinese novel *Water Margin*, Yoshitaka Murayama's games stand apart from many similar works of the time thanks to strong narration, rich character development and a genuinely fascinating story that covers war, betrayal, political subterfuge and the impact this has on the people fighting on both sides.

Equally good are *Suikoden*'s combat mechanics, which again, help it stand out from its peers. In addition to traditional turn-based fighting, *Suikoden* features occasional one-on-one fights and dramatic battles featuring tiny sprites where you can use powerful tactics to hopefully sway the final result (careful, as heroes lost in these battles are lost for good). The sequel adds to this by upgrading its bigger battles to a grid-based system instead.

It's a pity then that the quality-of-life enhancements aren't quite as magnificent as the games, with many like 8-way movement and dashing coming from the earlier PSP remakes. Unfortunately we rarely used the option to speed up combat as it also speeds up the game's superb music, while the saving system is atrocious and is virtually identical to the original games. While this collection is arguably the best way to experience both games today it feels like they've been put together with a shoestring budget. What a shame.

» Score **81%**

» [PC] *Suikoden II* is a superb sequel that greatly refines what was already a fantastic RPG.

» [PC] In addition to the new HD backgrounds, this remaster adds useful character logs and three difficulty levels. It aso runs great on the Steam Deck.

Evercade: Broken Sword Collection

» **System:** Evercade family » **Buy it for:** £24.99
» **Buy it from:** Online, retail

The latest release from Blaze is another one of its Giga Carts and it houses two of the best point-and-adventures of the Nineties. Like Konami's *Suikoden* games, both titles have aged like fine wine and they remain genuinely great to play. This is down to their scripts and a selection of memorable and often eccentric characters. Based on the PlayStation versions, you can expect a fair bit of loading on both games and we noticed that transitions between areas took longer when playing on the Alpha. There's the usual customisable controls and the ability to save whenever you want, but it's a bare package that feels a little pricey at the new £24.99 price point.

DARRAN JONES

» Score **80%**

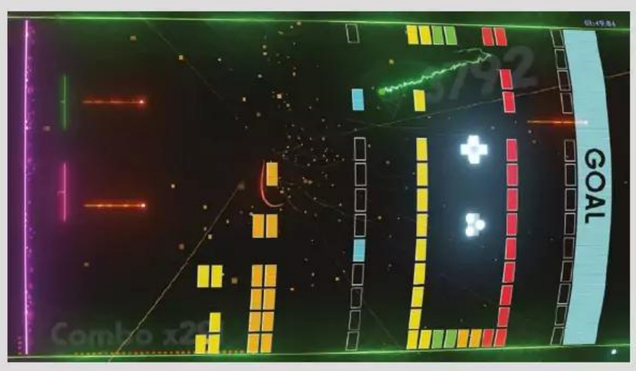
Xenoblade Chronicles X: Definitive Edition

» **System:** Switch » **Buy it from:** Online, retail
» **Buy it for:** £49.99

When Earth becomes collateral damage in an alien conflict, humanity flees and crash lands on the planet Mira. You play as a newly awakened person in this open-world RPG, joining the colonisation effort by joining up with other party members, taking on missions and piloting the Skell mech suits. The original version is one of the Wii U's best games and this update preserves its best qualities, particularly the impressive scale and design of Mira. Combat benefits from some changes to how ability cooldowns work, and there are additions including a new story chapter and new Skells. Only fanatics need to upgrade, but if you haven't played it, this is a treat.

NICK THORPE

» Score **87%**



Breakout Beyond

» **System:** PC (version tested), Atari VCS, PS4, PS5, Switch, Xbox One, Xbox Series S/X
» **Buy it for:** £12.79 » **Buy it from:** Online

Although Atari has already revisited *Breakout* with its *Recharged* series, this new offering from Choice Provisions is just as worthy of your time. Patterns of bricks are now arranged to your right and you must break out of the area in a tight time limit. Each time a brick is struck, the rest will move towards you and if your paddle hits them you'll temporarily freeze in place. Fortunately, your paddle is equipped with a speed boost to reach wayward balls and you can also slow time, although this lowers your combo. With its solid power-ups and stylish aesthetics, *Breakout Beyond* proves to be an entertaining, if rather sparse take on the classic series.

DARRAN JONES

» Score **70%**

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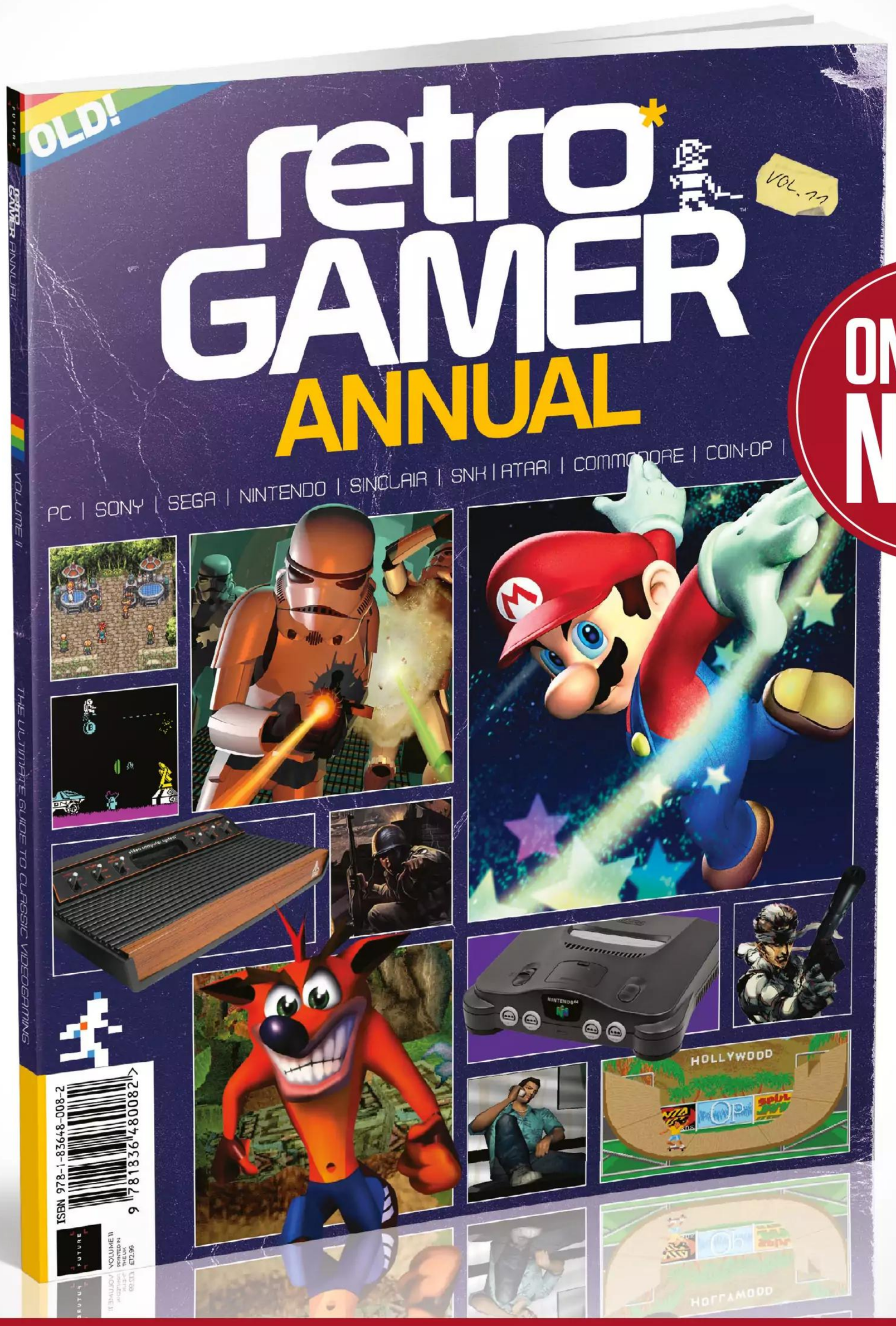
Our latest tome features an incredible amount of fantastic content from Retro Gamer's past 12 months. Iconic characters, huge franchises and classic systems all feature, making it an essential read for retro fans. Don't miss it!



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FUTURE

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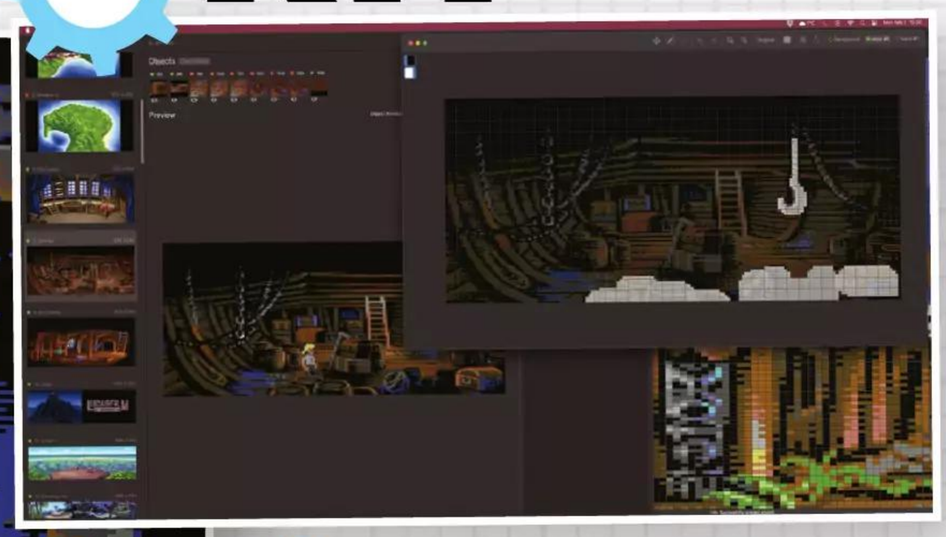
<YOUR MONTHLY GUIDE TO EVERYTHING HAPPENING IN THE HOMEBREW SCENE/>



<!--- [PC] A GLIMPSE INSIDE THE TOOL THAT ALLOWS JOACHIM TO KEEP TRACK OF GAME ASSETS. --->

<!--- [C64] THE SCUMM BAR COMES TO LIFE WITH ANIMATIONS AND GUYBRUSH MOVING AROUND. --->

<MAIN HEADER>

PIRATE PERFECTION

<INTRO> PREPARE TO SET SAIL FOR MONKEY ISLAND ON YOUR COMMODORE 64, THANKS TO THE OUTSTANDING GRAPHICS OF JOACHIM LJUNGGREN </INTRO>

<INTRO> WE WERE SAD TO LEARN OF THE PASSING OF TONY KINGSMILL IN FEBRUARY 2025. TONY HAD RETURNED TO PROGRAMMING WITH THE UPDATE OF HIS 1992 BBC MICRO GAME AIRLINE BOSS AND HAD PRODUCED NEW TITLES, INCLUDING TEXT ADVENTURE GHOSTSHIP DELGADO AND THE VERTICALLY SCROLLING SPECTRUM SHMUP XENOBLAST PUBLISHED THROUGH CRONOSOFT. OUR THOUGHTS ARE WITH TONY'S FAMILY AND FRIENDS AT THIS TIME, AND WE WANT TO THANK TONY FOR THE GAMES. </INTRO>

<!--- ARTIST JOACHIM LJUNGGREN IS A BIG FAN OF THE MONKEY ISLAND SERIES. --->

<BODY> **Artist Joachim Ljunggren is no stranger to the *Monkey Island* series, having played all the games before joining project.** "It's the coder Andreas Larsson's idea. He worked on this for a long time to get a grip on if this was even possible. He contacted me asking if I wanted to make the graphics – it would be mad to pass on such an amazing opportunity. Ron Gilbert gave his approval and is looking forward to seeing the final game."

With approval gained, key tools were the next thing to be developed. "My main tool has been the pixel editor ALBERT which I developed together with Luigi di Fraia, all the backgrounds have been done with that," explains Joachim. "The tool for pixelling and animating the objects was developed by Andreas; there would simply have been too much management of file assets and keeping track of thousands upon thousands of assets."

Critically, the team wants to recreate everything from the Amiga original. "Every dialogue, every object, every scene is there," says Joachim. "Our aim is to leave nothing out – with some enhancements where possible." As you'd expect, the effort involved is massive. "Each single-picture room takes maybe 20-30 hours to make," says Joachim. "Multi-screen rooms take even longer. For example, there are a lot of animations in the Scumm Bar scene. It's never done, there is always something to polish on the graphics. It's easy to get stuck and obsess over tiny pixels. The characters are the most complex and tricky things to do, where everything is split into parts that are then composited together. Add to that scaling of the character when they walk further away and clipping with masks when Guybrush goes behind objects."

The finished game will be released on a special 2MB cartridge, with 80 rooms and over 4,000 frames of animation. There's big plans for the music too. "We have one person on music, someone we still want

DEMAKE ISLAND

YOU HAVE TO WIN THE GAME

bit.ly/yhtwtg-c64

<The CGA-style graphics of this charming Metroidvania have been beautifully reproduced by Kabuto. />

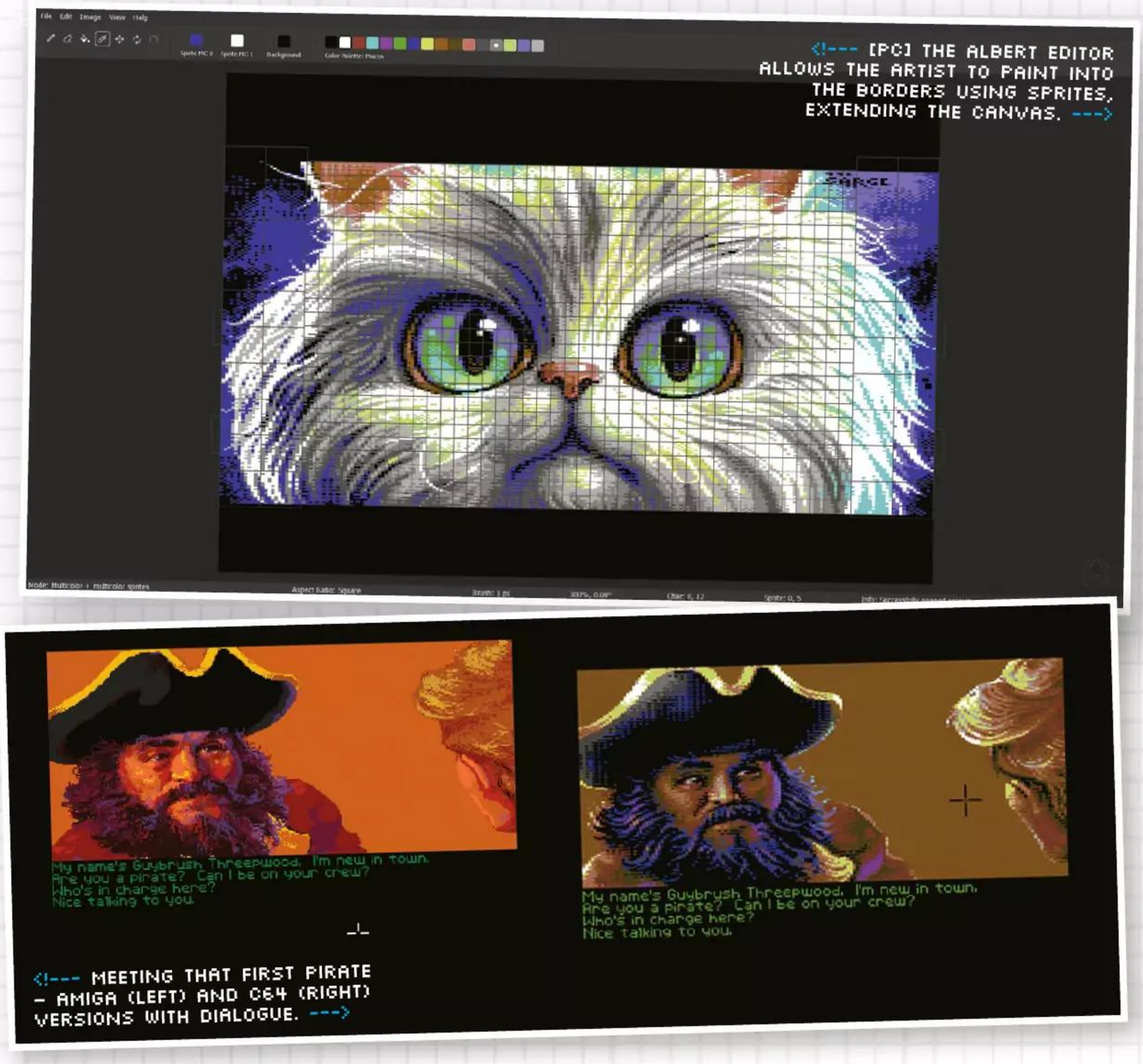
LUFTRAUSERZ

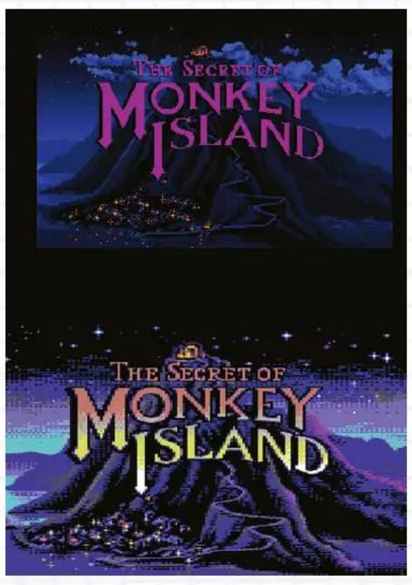
bit.ly/luftrauserz

<Paul Koller makes exceedingly good demakes – with this, Vlambeer's *Super Crate Box*, the recent *Spelunky*, *Micro Hexagon*, *Canabalt* and more. />

NEW GAMES NEEDED

Our new email address is waiting for all your homebrew news, previews and more: **retrogamer@futurenet.com**





<!--- COMPARING THE AMIGA (TOP) AND C64 (BOTTOM) TITLE SCREENS. --->

to keep a secret," Joachim offers. "We try to keep the team small since we all believe in small teams. A team is very special and the chemistry behind the people is so important. Hopefully, we get the chance to work on more point-and-click adventures in the future." Joachim mentions an interest in converting other SCUMM games as well, particularly *Loom*. So what does Joachim think makes *Monkey Island* so special? "The humour and the characters, the unique fighting system, and the super cosy setting of having an adventure as a pirate," he says. "Maybe we can relate a bit to Guybrush since he was a nobody at the beginning of the game. So we could grow with him and learn things together. *Monkey Island* is made with a huge amount of love and passion, and it shows. And such games just stick forever." The passion this team has for the game is showing, so we can't wait to fight like a cow once more. </BODY>

<INTRO> MORE IMPRESSIVE C64 DEMAKES TO CHECK OUT </INTRO>

BALLS LIKE A FROG

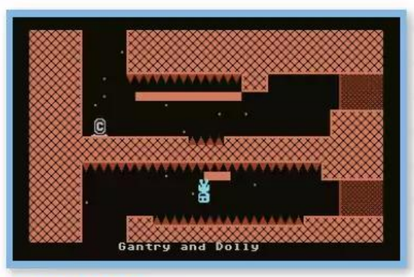
bit.ly/balls-c64

Dr Mortalwombat gave C64 fans his take on *Zuma* – then tackled *Plants Vs Zombies* (which was renamed as *Veggies Vs Undead*). />

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS: EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

bit.ly/beholder-c64

The dungeon crawler got an incredible conversion, adding an automap (C128 users can display it on a second screen). />



VVVVVV

bit.ly/vvvvvv-c64

Terry Cavanagh's gravity-defying game is a bona fide indie classic, and this 2017 conversion plays superbly. />

NEWSBYTES

<INTRO> ALL THE LATEST NEWS, HANDILY ARRANGED BY FORMAT </INTRO>

Acorn Electron: Iapetus released *Zezito* and *Lost Stars*. Name a price at bit.ly/zezito-acorn />

Aquarius: IrataHack's *Wee Knight Escape Trilogy (Forest, Castle and Pyramid)* is now available for the enhanced Aquarius+ hardware. Get exploring at bit.ly/weeknight-aquarius />

C64: Dungeon crawler *Evil Dungeon III* is available to buy from shop.retroarts.de />

ColecoVision: Relive the classic Game & Watch release *Manhole* thanks to Electric Dreams. Head on over to bit.ly/manhole-coleco />

Game Boy Color: *Cave Dave* is the brilliant *Spelunky*-like platformer from Shane McCafferty and Thalamus Digital. Go spelunking at bit.ly/cavedave />

Mega Drive: old_pirate converted Matt Hughson's fantastic NES puzzle game *Witch 'N Wiz*. You'll find the download by heading to bit.ly/witchnwiz-megadrive />

N64: Check out the results of N64Brew's Game Jam 2024, where creators made four-player minigames. Find them all by heading to bit.ly/n64brew-2024 />

Neo Geo: After his excellent *Shinobi* port, Hoffman has now finished his conversion of *Golden Axe*. Get chopping by visiting bit.ly/goldenaxe-neogeo />

PC: Langford Productions released its unofficial *Manic Miner* tribute, with 20 new levels alongside the original levels. Give it a try at bit.ly/manicminer-pc />

PC Engine: *Special Ninja Squad* – previewed in **RG**257 – has a demo you can try. Get practising at bit.ly/ninjasquad-pce />

PICO-8: Adam Saltsman of *Canabalt* fame released two new titles – *Skeleton Gelatin* and *Vampire Vs Pope Army*. You'll find them both at adamatomic.itch.io />

VIC-20: Lechuck released his version of *Columns*, which requires 8K of expanded memory. Get puzzling at bit.ly/columns-vic20
While we're on the subject of the VIC-20, you can follow Aleksi Eben's progress converting *Elite* to the system (requires 35K expansion) by heading to vic20elite.wordpress.com />

ZX Spectrum 128: *Plyuk* from Retro Souls sees you use your clones to help you escape. Name your price at bit.ly/plyuk-zx
Also, check out Gabriele Amore's *Lunar Patrol*, which is at bit.ly/lunarpatrol-zx />

DREAM DESIGNER

BRIAN FLANAGAN

<INTRO> BRIAN IS DESIGNING BANANA BASH, DRAWING GRAPHICS, AND MAKING THE MUSIC – BUT NOT CODING! </INTRO>

<INFO FROM: MANCHESTER, NOW IN JAPAN WEBSITE: WORK3STUDIO.WEEBLY.COM FORMAT: NES/FAMICOM PREVIOUS GAMES: AGE OF MYTHOLOGY: RETOLD, DODONPACHI SAIDAIOUJOU EXA LABEL, AKAI KATANA EXA LABEL, NARUTO TO BORUTO: SHINOBI STRIKER WORKING ON: BANANA BASH (SARU KANI PANIC IN JAPAN) />

WHAT INSPIRED BANANA BASH, BRIAN?

Single-screen classics like *Pang* (I worked on the Game Boy version!), *Bubble Bobble*, *Rainbow Islands*, *Liquid Kids* and *Snow Bros*. We needed a side-view perspective with gravity, so a monkey was the perfect character. I also drew inspiration from Japanese legend *Saru Kani Gassen* (*The Battle Of The Monkey And The Crab*), about a greedy monkey who refuses to share fruit. This shaped the setting and fruit mechanic.

<!--- BRIAN FLANAGAN, NOW LIVING AND WORKING IN JAPAN, VISITED THE MASARU-KUN GUARDIAN AT TOKYO'S HIE SHRINE. --->

WHAT IS YOUR DEVELOPMENT ENVIRONMENT LIKE?

The game is fully coded in assembler and C++ by colleagues I met at iNiS, in Tokyo. My graphics have a nostalgic twist: they're created in DPaint! I've been using it since my days as an artist at Ocean in the Eighties, so I'm incredibly fast with it. I use a modern tool called NEXXT to transform the graphics into NES tile sets. For music, I start by composing prototypes in Ableton Live, then convert those using Famitracker. One cool detail: when you hit a block in the game, it triggers a key-matched note that syncs with the background music's beat; a small touch that ties the gameplay and music together.

WHAT REMAINS TO BE DONE BEFORE THE KICKSTARTER CAMPAIGN?

We're refining the combo system to make it clearer and adding more boss crabs. High-score tables are on the list – ideally using SRAM for permanent records. The multiplayer battle mode is in the polish stage, and we're adding arcade-style prompts like "Ready?" "Stage Clear!" and "Ring Out!" to make gameplay feel more dynamic. Once all that's in place, it'll be down to bug fixes!

WHAT WILL BACKERS RECEIVE?

Every backer receives a Devilcat keychain and digital soundtrack. Cartridges will come in exclusive backer-only colours. Special edition backers get a keychain, pin badge, acrylic diorama and collector's box. The game will be on a transparent cartridge with full-body print art – I'm printing these myself. Afterwards, we plan to release a physical version in classic grey without any extras.

<!--- [NES] OOKI THE MONKEY JUMPS BETWEEN BLOCKS, HITTING ALL THE BANANAS AND DROPPING LARGE FRUIT ON ENEMIES TO STUN THEM. --->

<!--- [NES] "DEVILCAT (MY FAVOURITE CHARACTER) IS A PINK FLYING CAT WHO APPEARS IF YOU LINGER ON A STAGE TOO LONG!" EXPLAINS BRIAN. --->

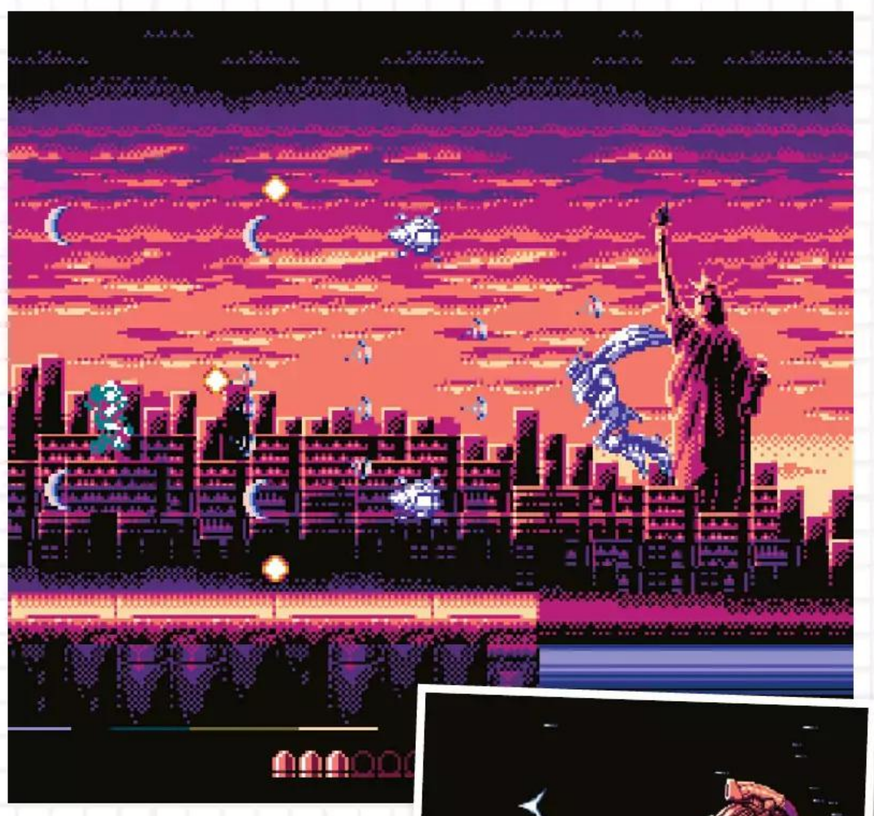
DATA BURST

CHANGEABLE GUARDIAN ESTIQUE

<INFO FORMAT: NES/FAMICOM CREDITS: CAT HUI TRADING FOR BROKE STUDIOS PRICE: €50 PLUS POSTAGE WEB: BIT.LY/ESTIQUE-PHYSICAL />

<BODY> **When we featured this NES game in RG268, we were blown away by its graphics and soundtrack.** Playing more of the game emphasises just how impressive it is, stretching the NES hardware with minimal flicker and slowdown. The player controls the giant mecha Estique, switching between fighter and robot forms – the robot regains energy quicker but has a larger hitbox. To defeat the aliens that have invaded Earth, you fight through five major cities before heading into space. Huge mayors appear after a warning at the end of each level and dominate the screen. There are three difficulty settings and they get increasingly challenging. This is not a game you will breeze through, but you can continue from the last level reached. The sumptuous graphics look even better on a CRT, the music is brilliant throughout, and the physical edition benefits from great packaging including its impressive front cover illustration and a gorgeous-looking booklet. Shoot-'em-up fans should have no hesitation in picking it up. It is worth noting there are differences in the cutscenes and intro/outro sequences between the Famicom and NES versions. If you have the capable hardware, go for the Famicom cartridge for a more authentic flavour of this brilliant game. </BODY>

SCORE: 91%



<!--- [NES] TAKING ON A MINI-BOSS IN FRONT OF THE STATUE OF LIBERTY AT SUNSET. --->

<!--- [NES] ONE OF THE SUPERB BOSSES YOU MUST DEFEAT, BUT IT TAKES A LOT OF FIREPOWER. --->

NEW GAMES NEEDED

Our new email address is waiting for all your homebrew news, previews and more: **retrogamer@futurenet.com**

THE HOMEBREWER'S KIT

<!--- [ZX SPECTRUM 128] THE BLUE SHIELD PICKUP IS USEFUL, GIVING A SHORT PERIOD OF INVULNERABILITY. --->

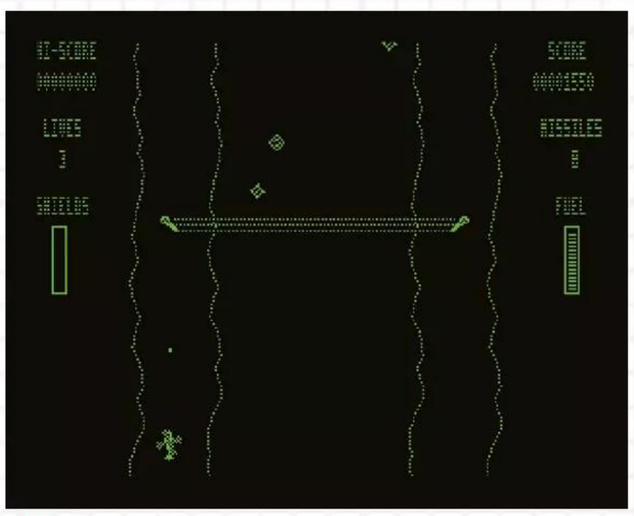
<!--- [ZX SPECTRUM 128] MISSION 2 SEES YOU TRACKING DOWN AND KILLING ENEMY AGENTS USING YOUR BOMBS. --->

SCION

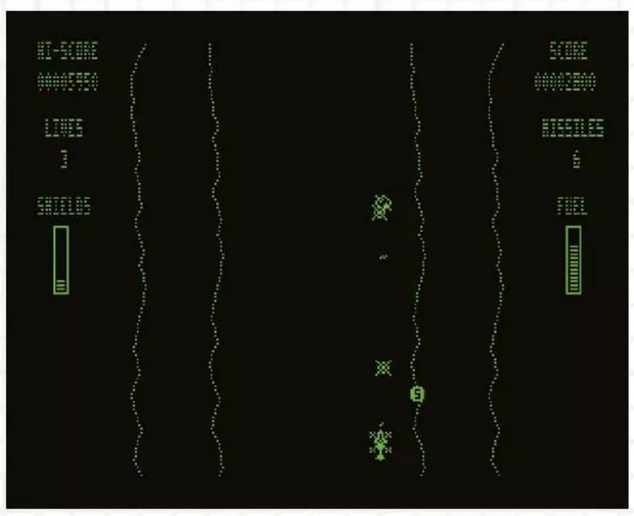
<INFO FORMAT: SPECTRUM CREDITS: SAUSAGEWARE GAMES FOR BITMAP SOFT (TOM POTTER, KEVIN MCGRORTY, JOE OLNEY) PRICE: £1.99 DIGITAL DOWNLOAD / £12 CASSETTE (PRICES TBC) WEB: BITMAPSOFT.CO.UK />

<BODY> **Previewed in RG269, as an agent of the Special Covert Infiltration Operations Network you must infiltrate the Pacific island lair of Maz Mort.** Your wrist-mounted computer allows you to resupply while out in the field (if you have enough coins and no enemies are around), while coloured keys are needed to open the corresponding doors. You'll need to eliminate all targets on a level before finding the access lift to the next of five missions, across Easy and Hard difficulties. Shooting enemies is fun, while the scrolling maps take some exploring. SCION's graphics and sound are great, and while it may not last, this secret agent run-and-gun is still very enjoyable. </BODY>

SCORE: 82%



<!--- [ACORN ELECTRON] THE BARRIER TOWERS SHOOT BACK AS YOU TRY TO DISABLE THEM. --->



<!--- [ACORN ELECTRON] THE GAME OVER SCREEN GIVES YOU A RANKING – WE GOT 'MOSTLY HARMLESS' ON OUR FIRST GO... --->

APACHE CANYON

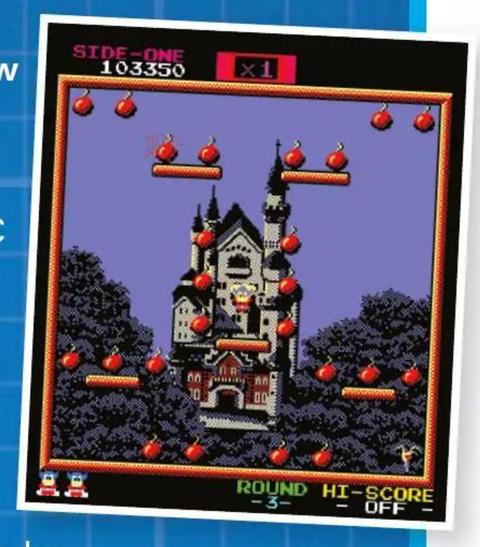
<INFO FORMAT: ACORN ELECTRON (BBC VERSION TO BE COMPLETED) CREDITS: ROB STONE PRICE: FREE (PHYSICAL EDITIONS TBC) WEB: BIT.LY/APACHE-ONLINE (PLAY ONLINE) BIT.LY/APACHE-DOWNLOAD (ELECTRON DOWNLOAD) />

<BODY> **Rob's *River Raid*-inspired blaster features a helicopter fighting against alien ships.** Missiles have a limited homing ability so you will rely on the main cannon. If you have shot enough enemies, F and S tokens appear to replenish fuel and shields. Large barriers block the route ahead, which can be lowered by shooting the two columns. Survive long enough and you face a larger UFO. The monochrome green graphics work well, but the sound is limited. This fun shoot-'em-up will get a physical release from Retro Power. </BODY>

SCORE: 79%

PROCESSING

<INTRO> BOMB JACK EXTRA SUGAR EDITION IS ANTHONY FLACK'S FORTHCOMING AMSTRAD CPC REMAKE OF THE CLASSIC COIN-OP, AND IT LOOKS GREAT </INTRO>



<BODY> **Anthony grew up with the CPC and *Bomb Jack* was one of his favourite arcade games.** "I knew the CPC could match the arcade game's resolution if I used 4-colour mode, and I had done some speed tests and thought 50fps should be possible," we're told. "I set aside my Sunday afternoons for a year – and it ended up taking two years, in true game-development fashion. I did a lot of optimising for speed, and tricks to add extra colours and other visual effects."

There are some great enhancements. "I tried to make it the complete package as you would expect from a modern title, I even added some simple achievements. I added the option to play with reversed bomb order, or randomised bomb order. As well as a faithful recreation of the arcade levels, there's a Remix Mode with new layouts and backgrounds and an actual ending. Scramble Mode gives you randomised layouts. Cheats are built-in and high scores are saved to disk." Jump for joy at bit.ly/bombjack-extrasugar </BODY>

<!--- [AMSTRAD CPC] ANTHONY SAYS, "I LOVE THE HOMEBREW SCENE, I WANTED A PROJECT TO HELP ME LEARN Z80 CODE AND CONTRIBUTE TO THE COMMUNITY." --->

» [PC] Many consider *Fate Of Atlantis* to be Indy's best digital outing. It would have made for a great movie.

INDIANA JONES GAMES

The team look back on the digital exploits of Dr Jones

DARRAN JONES

NICK THORPE

TIM EMPEY

Despite his films being full of dramatic setpieces, thrilling action and interesting characters, Indiana Jones hasn't actually appeared in a huge number of videogames. Nick, Darran and Tim look back at some of the ones he has featured in.

DARRAN
What's the first *Indiana Jones* game that you can ever remember playing?

NICK
That would be *Indiana Jones And The Last Crusade* on the Master System. I remember it being pretty tricky, to the point that I'd use the Action Replay cartridge to disable the time limit.

TIM
The arcade version of *Indiana Jones And The Temple Of Doom*. I can't remember exactly where I played it, but I do remember being absolutely rubbish at it.

DARRAN
Mine was the original *Raiders Of The Lost Ark* on the Atari 2600. I didn't like *Last Crusade*, but loved *Temple Of Doom* and played it a lot. What was tricky about *Last Crusade*, Nick?

NICK
Just about everything, as I recall. It was quite easy to take a lot of damage if you weren't careful, but the time limits didn't give you much opportunity to exercise caution. You also didn't have the whip by default – it was a power-up with limited uses. It turns out the game is only ten minutes long if you're good, which is probably why it was such a pain.

DARRAN
Well, I clearly wasn't any good at it. I don't think I ever got past the second stage. Did anyone play *Fate Of Atlantis* on release?

NICK
I actually didn't play it until relatively recently, and then only to get some screenshots for the mag. It's a nice-looking game, though.

> "You didn't have the whip by default – it was a power-up with limited uses"
> NICK THORPE

TIM
I still haven't played that one yet. It must not have been swapped a lot in the school grounds at breaktime, so I missed it.

DARRAN
Probably because of all the disks it came on, Tim. *Fate Of Atlantis*, *Monkey Island* and *Eye Of The Beholder 2* were the main reasons why I traded my NTSC SNES collection for an Amiga 1200. That proved to be a mistake as the disk-swapping on all the games was torturous. I enjoyed *Fate Of Atlantis* a lot more once I had the CD-ROM version on PC. So what does everyone consider to be the best *Indiana Jones* game?

NICK
I found *Indiana Jones' Greatest Adventures* on the SNES to be pretty impressive, though that does come with a big caveat – I haven't played popular ones like *Infernal Machine* or the *Lego* games, and I'll probably never play *The Great Circle*.

TIM
Lego Indiana Jones 2... because I reviewed the first one, but never completed it and didn't get to find out what happened when you collected all the stuff. For some reason that really annoyed me. So, a few years later I went out to buy it, messed up and ended

» [PlayStation 3] If you're looking for a great starring Indy, both Tim and Darran can recommend his first *Lego* outing.

» [PC] We remember this from the film – X marks the spot. Hang on, there's only nine squares! Tricky puzzles in here!

» [PC] Sadly, Lucasfilm only made a handful of games in the *Desktop* series. This is one of them.

» [SNES] *Indiana Jones' Greatest Adventures* features loads of memorable setpieces from the films.

up with the sequel. I finished it and didn't unlock anything very special, bah!

DARRAN

Both the *Lego* games are good fun. For me it's got to be *The Infernal Machine*. I paid a small fortune for the N64 version and while it's incredibly buggy, it's an amazingly ambitious game with huge open-world areas (for the N64) and some interesting boss battles. Nick mentioned *The Great Circle*, can we assume that it's the first-person view that's putting you off it?

NICK

Yeah, that's basically it. I don't want to make a great circular splatter of motion sickness. It seemed like you enjoyed it though, Tim?

TIM

Yep, I really liked it, so much so that I got all the Achievements. If anyone hasn't played it I'd advise just going through the main story and avoid the sidequests (you can do them later). This way it feels much more like you're playing an *Indiana Jones* film, rather than getting bogged down with all the pick-ups. And I reckon it makes for a grand *Indiana Jones* flick, certainly better than the last two films.

» [PC] Tim feels *Indiana Jones And The Great Circle* is better than the last two movies.

It's a really great game, I hope there's more of them to come.

DARRAN

I'm only a little way into it, but I've really enjoyed what I've played so far. It's interesting that we've not really had a lot of *Indiana Jones* games over the years compared to *Star Wars*. Why do we think that is?

TIM

I'm not sure, I was surprised that *The Great Circle* was first-person, maybe it was to get away from chicken-and-egg *Tomb Raider* comparisons.

DARRAN

Or *Uncharted* ones?

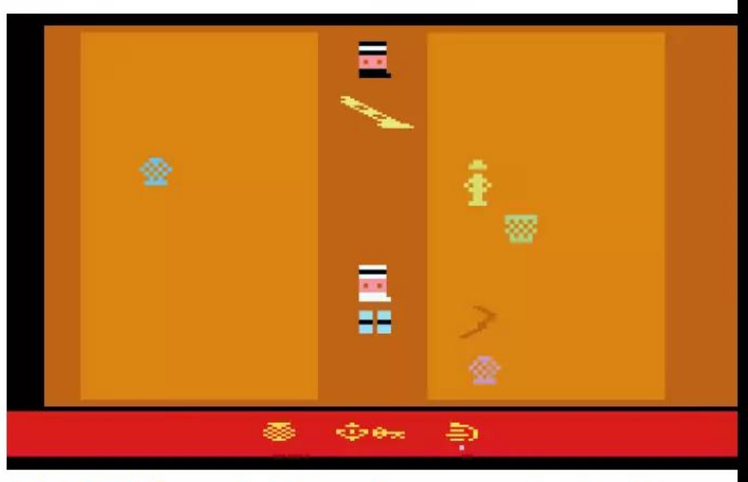
NICK

I feel like *Star Wars* is probably a more versatile property – we've had action adventure games, first-person shooters, racing games, space shooters, beat-'em-ups and so on, and they all make sense within that universe. I don't think you could reasonably get so much mileage out of Indy.

DARRAN

Ironic really, because as Indy once pointed out in *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*, "It's not the years, honey. It's the mileage." ✱

» [Arcade] Indy's arcade outing featured saving children, mine carts and whipping Thuggee guards.



» [Atari 2600] The very first *Indiana Jones* game was based on his first movie, *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*.

» [PC] Darran was a big fan of *Indiana Jones And The Infernal Machine* and completed it a few years back on the N64.

READERS REACT

Here are the Indy adventures you still enjoy

zx_spectrum_30
Temple Of Doom. I thought US Gold did a great job on the ZX Spectrum version.

Brian Hooper
I absolutely loved *Indiana Jones And The Temple Of Doom* in the arcades. It absolutely nailed the gloomy atmosphere of the film and, as per usual, Atari allowed you to select your starting difficulty in style.

Fables Folly
Lego Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures for the PlayStation 2.

A37927
The first *Tomb Raider*. It was always, at its core, an *Indiana Jones*-based game.

Boy Aditya
Indiana Jones And The Fate Of Atlantis. It's probably the second game (after *Prince Of Persia*) that I tried on my older cousin's PC. The game was like no other Sega Genesis games that I had. I finally know why people love PC games.

Pig Dog Bay
Temple Of Doom in the arcade. I loved the graphics at the time. Fortune and glory is still my motto!

Doctor James O Butler
Goodness me, I absolutely loved *Desktop Adventures*. I spent so many hours on the shareware version, before getting a big box copy (it was a floppy disk with a tiny manual iirc) for Christmas – which made that day so memorable, of course. So much story built from randomised elements, genius design.

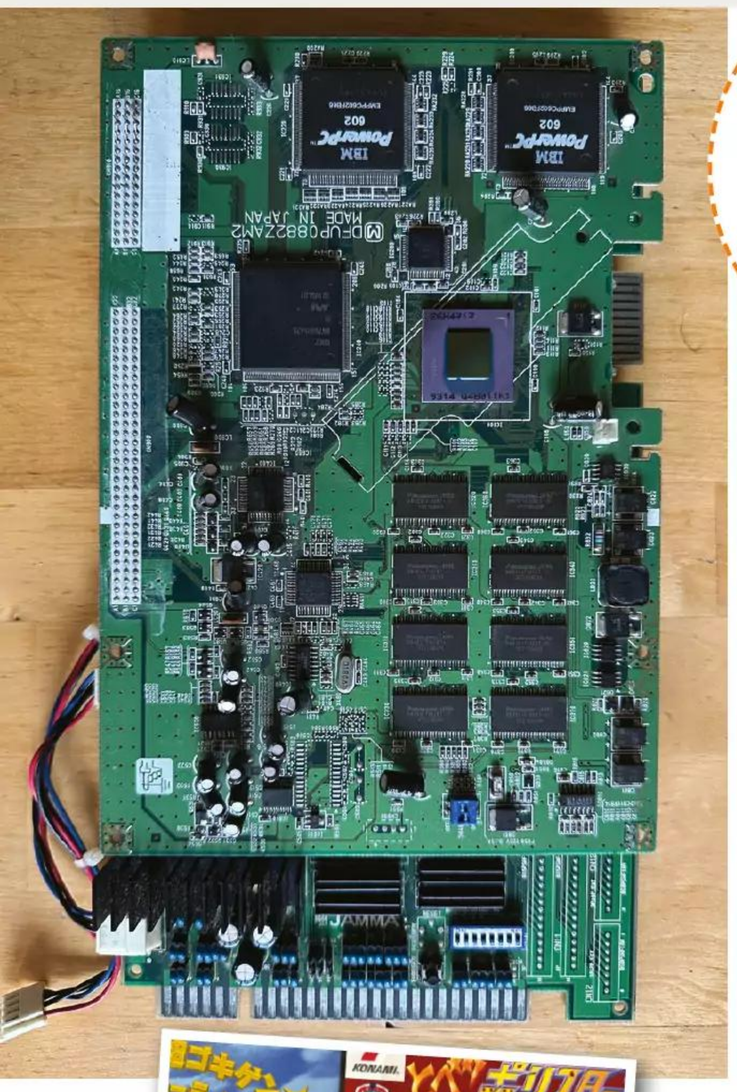
1000kindsofrain
Tomb Raider. And I'm not being deliberately snarky. It was the first game that made you feel like you were inside an *Indiana Jones* film, for real; I remember saying at the time, "This is the game LucasArts should have made."

The Lego Videogame Museum
Lego Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures, closely followed by *Fate Of Atlantis* and *The Great Circle*.

Maged Ghoraba
The Fate Of Atlantis, I still regard it as the greatest *Indiana Jones* story ever written. Hal Barwood is a legend.

COLLECTOR'S CORNER

READERS TAKE US THROUGH **THE RETRO KEYHOLE**



PANASONIC FZ-21 (3DO M2)

"That took me over a decade to find. The only thing they used it for was elder care memory games, to help people in nursing homes better retain their memories, and for driver training software."

AMOUNT PAID: $1,000

BUBBLE MEMORIES

"It is a Korean only PC release that is just a really bad version of MAME on the CD. I talked to a Korean collector and they said that these things got extremely limited runs. Never seen one before. Never seen one again."

AMOUNT PAID: $5

ESOTERIC TASTES

This collector's hoard is full of interesting and rare oddities

This month's collector has an eye for the obscure, as he's best known for his popular YouTube channel, Video Game Esoterica – a channel that highlights lesser-known games across a variety of formats. "Growing up, my father just loved playing videogames. I watched him at an arcade when I was a kid, put a quarter into a *Dragon's Lair* machine and beat it from memory on a 1CC attempt," Anthony recalls. "He just always loved games, especially the arcade. Growing up, he would just show up with, 'Hey, the Sega Genesis is out, I brought it home,' or, 'The 3DO is out, let's go pick that up.'"

However, Anthony's collection doesn't go back to his childhood. "I had a lot of games and systems up until about 2004, and then I sold everything because I worked as a ski filmmaker. I was constantly travelling 300 days out of the year, and I didn't even really live anywhere," he tells us. His current collection began when he and his wife bought a Wii with *Mario Kart Wii*. "I launched the YouTube channel because I've always been a working filmmaker, but I just wasn't really doing anything that was particularly of interest to me at that point in time. I love sharing games and getting people excited for what I really enjoy, so I'm doing a channel and conversationally walking people through all the weird things that are out there."

Sometimes, that passion is for specific games like *Killing Time*. "It really is like an undiscovered, hidden gem that feels like a precursor to what *BioShock* would become and be acclaimed for decades later," he explains. Anthony even helped out with Nightdive Studios' *Killing Time: Resurrected*. "I sent in everything I had ever collected, file wise, scan wise, so they could include that in the package."

However, Anthony's collection also contains plenty of obscure hardware including various incarnations of the ill-fated 3DO M2 and the Hyper Neo Geo 64, as well as things like prototype games. How does he find such items? "More often than not, they find me," he replies. "People have something. They don't know what to do with it, they don't know how to dump it or preserve it, and they recognise that getting it into my hands means that it will be documented, photographed, dumped, preserved and shared with everybody."

Indeed, Anthony's YouTube channel shows that he is a big advocate for MAME, MiSTer FPGA and other emulation technology. "When it comes down to it, if you're playing a game and you're having fun with it, I am happy as to whatever methodology you choose to play that game," he says – and it's that desire to share that drives his collection goals these days. "My major hunt is for things that you can't play unless someone like me finds them," Anthony says. "I may never find it, but those are kind of the things that I really focus on these days, especially if there's no real hardware captures online or the hardware has never been torn down." ✱

BIO

NAME:
Anthony

LOCATION:
Chicago, USA

ESTIMATED VALUE OF COLLECTION:
Around $500,000

FAVOURITE SYSTEMS:
3DO, Neo Geo

FAVOURITE GAMES:
Killing Time, Wattam

SOCIAL CHANNELS:
@VideoGameEsoterica (YouTube), @videogameesoterica.bsky.social (BlueSky), @VEsoterica (Twitter)

Got an impressive collection of your own? Contact us at:

RetroGamerUK @RetroGamer_Mag retrogamer@futurenet.com retrogamermag.bsky.social

TOBE POLYSTARS

"It's basically a pseudo-sequel to *Detana Twinbee*, it runs on the 3DO M2 arcade hardware, and it's just bright, poppy, colourful, charming, everything you want a cute-'em-up to be."

AMOUNT PAID: $400

KILLING TIME BETA

"This was given to me by one of the developers that worked on the game from the 3DO offices. It has some very minor changes, we're talking different placements of textures, things such as that."

AMOUNT PAID: FREE

JEWEL IN THE CROWN

SAMURAI SHODOWN 64 PROTOTYPE

■ "It comes with history. You have the notes and tags on the front written in Japanese that are basically that this was for test locations, for AOU in Japan. It's the only known version of this to exist."

PAID: $100

BARGAIN HUNT

Your guide to the rising world of retro prices

THE COVER STAR

INDIANA JONES AND THE INFERNAL MACHINE

There are a few options to consider here. The PC version is cheapest, rarely topping **£15** for a boxed copy. The N64 version was a Blockbuster exclusive and only released in the US, so it can fetch as much as **£350** (and even higher if it is still sealed). The Game Boy Color option isn't as desirable and rarely passes **£40.**

COMBAT LYNX

This chopper sim won't leave your wallet embattled, as it's relatively cheap to acquire – Spectrum, Commodore 64 and Amstrad versions all tend to hit the **£3-£5** range.

GHOSTS 'N GOBLINS

8-bit home-computer versions of Capcom's cruel platformer can go for as little as **£5,** while complete PAL copies of the NES game can be pretty frightful at around the **£75** mark.

THE GAMES: WINTER CHALLENGE

A complete big box PC version of this might send you down a slippery slope, at **£45-£50.** Mega Drive copies start at **£5** for the plastic boxed release, and **£10** for the cardboard one.

GOLDENEYE 007

If your mission is to experience Grant Kirkhope's take on those classic *Bond* tunes again, a complete copy of the N64 hit will cost around **£20** – loose carts are naturally far cheaper.

STALKER: SHADOW OF CHERNOBYL

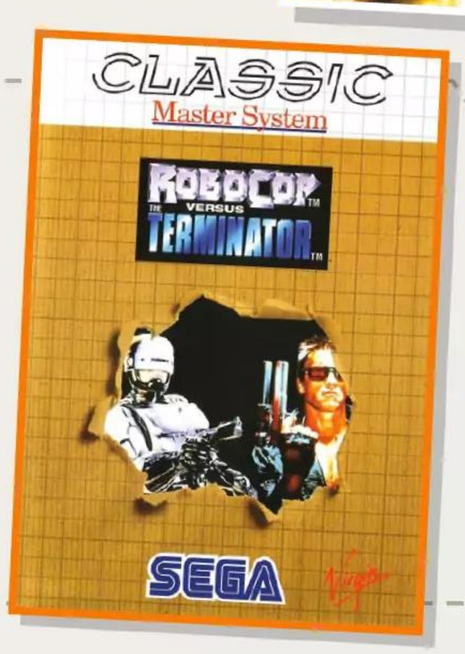
Anyone tempted to brave the Exclusion Zone will find that it's easy to gain access – the original PC DVD-ROM release is typically less than **£5,** even less than its **£9.99** digital price.

DESTROY ALL HUMANS!

If you fancy annihilating the pesky Earthling verm- erm, we mean brilliant human race, you won't have to pay much – PS2 and Xbox copies of this game typically sell for **£5** or less.

HOW MUCH?!

ROBOCOP VERSUS THE TERMINATOR



This Master System run-and-gun is a game you might have overlooked, but is it worth the **£1,000** a copy sold for recently? Most copies don't sell for nearly as much, but this one is a rare variant with the Classic cover, indicating that it's part of Sega's short-lived budget range.

Prices correct at time of print

WELCOME TO WRESTLING

How Nick learned to stop worrying and love the powerbomb

If you're in the habit of picking up Retro Gamer from a store, you may have spotted *Wrestling All-Stars* on the shelves. It's a new special that is filled with profiles of top wrestlers both past and present, greatest match listings and even posters, and I'm pleased to have contributed some pages to it. Doing this got me thinking about my own journey as a wrestling fan, which actually started 25 years ago more or less exactly – and as with so much in my life, it's inextricably tied to videogames.

The funny thing is, I was convinced that wrestling was rubbish primarily because of what I'd read in gaming magazines. *GamesMaster*'s review of *WWF In Your House* asked, "Wrestling? I mean – honestly – who watches it? Who even *cares* about The Undertaker anymore?" *Official PlayStation Magazine*'s review of *WWF War Zone* dismissed wrestling as "a couple of duffers pretending to elbow each other" and addressed non-fans as "those who are yet to appear on *Ricki Lake*". We didn't have cable or satellite TV, so I had no exposure to the actual shows and took those views on board uncritically. As the wrestling business exited its mid-Nineties slump and my friends started wearing D-Generation X shirts, I became the annoying person who would ask them, "You *do* know it's *fake*, right?"

Trying wrestling videogames didn't do much to help, at least initially. A PlayStation demo of *WCW Nitro* gave me the chance to hear Hollywood Hulk Hogan ranting in a way that seemed cheesy and lame, and the gameplay was miserable. *WWF War Zone* and *Attitude* received good reviews, but I always hated the way they controlled. What finally got me interested was a demo of *WWF SmackDown!*, the first in the long-running series from Yuke's – it looked great, it was fast-paced and pulling off impressive moves was very simple. Of the four characters in the demo, The Rock's preposterous People's Elbow finisher caused me to favour him over Stone Cold Steve Austin, Triple H and The Undertaker.

I wasn't about to go out and start waving a foam Stone Cold middle finger, though – I had a facade to maintain. While most of my friends had learned not to talk about wrestling around me, my friend Matt had persisted in talking to me about the WWF all the time, despite my expressed lack of interest. Now that I was at least mildly curious, I could hardly just admit it given how tremendously condescending I'd been. But I did start paying more attention, and by that point Channel 4 had started showing *WWF Sunday Night Heat* alongside shows like *Bits* and *Fist Of The North Star*, so I started watching too – "just because it's on" at first, of course. My dad got Sky around that summer too, and he saw me watching *SmackDown* during weekend visits often enough that he eventually went and bought himself the game.

My impression of lardy, barely mobile blokes making a mockery of both sport and entertainment was shattered by the charisma of The Rock, humour of Commissioner Foley and the insane stunt shows put on by Edge and Christian, the Hardy Boyz and the Dudley Boyz (pluralising with the letter 's' was seemingly illegal in 2000). By the time I was back at school in September, I was fully on board with wrestling and had even started watching *WCW Worldwide* on Channel 5, despite how utterly incoherent it was.

Through all of this, I still didn't have a wrestling game of my own – but with *WWF SmackDown! 2: Know Your Role* arriving imminently, I knew exactly what I wanted. I ended up regularly buying *PlayZone*, a cheap fortnightly PlayStation magazine aimed at a younger audience, because its preview coverage was so frequent and extensive. I got the game that Christmas and it was everything I'd hoped for – I loved the addition of ladder matches, table matches and the infamous Hell In A Cell, and the detailed character-creation feature allowed me to create guys that didn't make the cut like K-Kwik and Booker T.

I've had an up-and-down relationship with WWE and with wrestling games since then, but those first steps into wrestling fandom are still days I look back upon with great fondness. As well as gaining a new interest out of it all, I learned two lessons – firstly, clicking with someone else's opinion on games doesn't mean you'll agree with them on anything else. Secondly, and importantly, I learned to be less of a jerk when my likes differ from those of my friends. ✱

RING GENERALS

MY FAVOURITE WRESTLING GAMES

WWF SMACKDOWN! 2: KNOW YOUR ROLE
No surprise here, really. I loved *WWF No Mercy* too, but the second-hand copy I bought had the save-wiping bug.

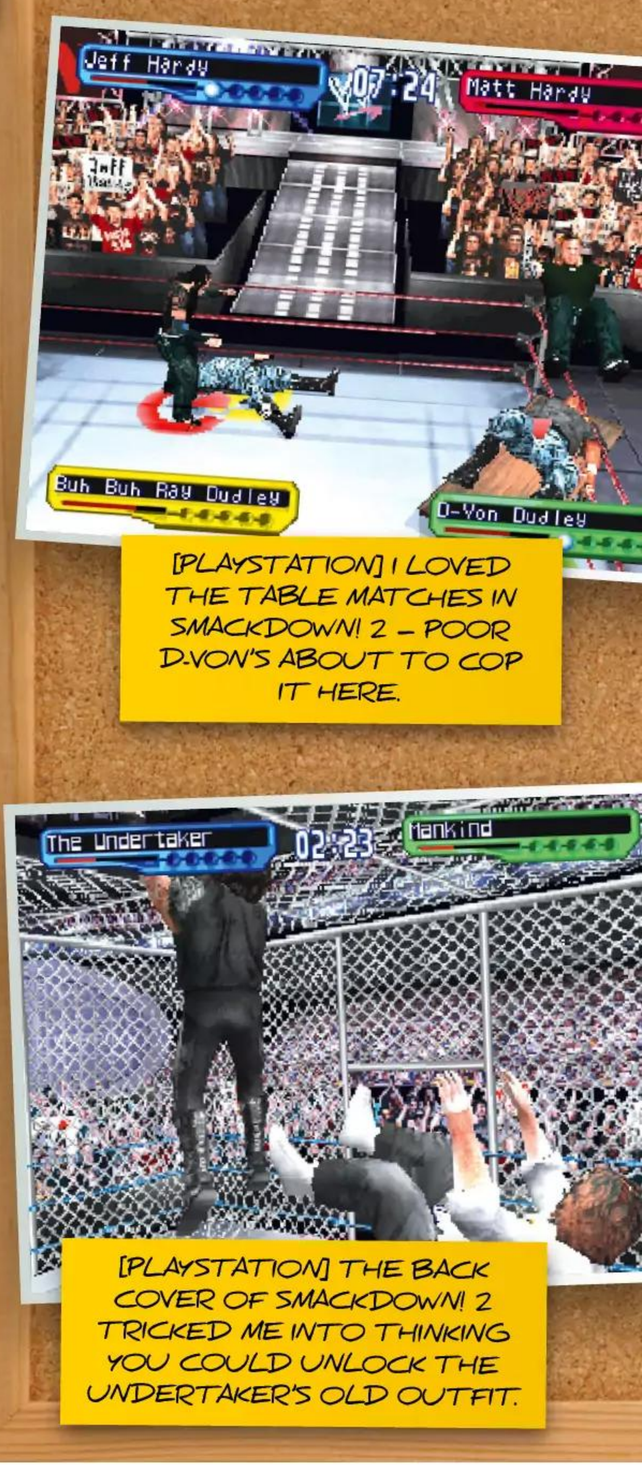
GIANT GRAM 2000: ALL JAPAN PRO WRESTLING 3
This Dreamcast game is light on modes, but its great graphics and bell-to-bell action make it a highlight for the console.

DEF JAM: FIGHT FOR NY
This one is arguably not quite a wrestling game in the same way its predecessor was, but who cares? It's a ton of fun.

WWE ALL-STARS
Wrestling's closest equivalent to *NBA Jam*, with cartoonish wrestler physiques and all manner of silly flippy moves.

FIRE PRO WRESTLING WORLD
Never mind the excellent roster of New Japan Pro Wrestling talent – the value here is in the community creations.

IF YOU'RE INTERESTED IN BUYING WRESTLING ALL-STARS, HEAD TO STORES OR MAGAZINESDIRECT.COM
WRESTLING
ALL-STARS
8 AMAZING POSTERS INSIDE
THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO THE KINGS – AND QUEENS – OF THE RING
TRIPLE H • WILL OSPREAY • LOGAN PAUL • JOHN CENA • LIV MORGAN


Jeff Hardy
07:24
Matt Hardy
Buh Buh Ray Dudley
D-Von Dudley
[PLAYSTATION] I LOVED THE TABLE MATCHES IN SMACKDOWN! 2 – POOR D-VON'S ABOUT TO COP IT HERE.
The Undertaker
02:23
Mankind
[PLAYSTATION] THE BACK COVER OF SMACKDOWN! 2 TRICKED ME INTO THINKING YOU COULD UNLOCK THE UNDERTAKER'S OLD OUTFIT.

WRESTLING ALL-STARS
CHRIS JERICHO
FUN FACT
Chris Jericho won the WWE Intercontinental Championship nine times – a company record
"FOR THREE AND A HALF DECADES, JERICHO HAS WRESTLED FOR ALMOST EVERY MAJOR PROMOTION"
From WCW cruiserweight stardom to top WWE and AEW titles, when ranking the greatest wrestlers ever, Jericho makes the list!
KING OF THE WORLD
MAJOR TITLES
×1 UNDISPUTED WWE CHAMPIONSHIP
×3 WWE WORLD HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP
×2 WCW CHAMPIONSHIP
×9 WWE INTERCONTINENTAL CHAMPIONSHIP
×2 WWE UNITED STATES CHAMPIONSHIP
×5 WWE WORLD TAG TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP
×4 WCW CRUISERWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP
×1 AEW WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP
×2 ROH WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP
WHO'S-SEE MATCHES
15 THE ROCK
WWE NO MERCY 21 OCTOBER 2001
15 SHAWN MICHAELS
WWE NO MERCY 5 OCTOBER 2008
15 KENNY OMEGA
NJPW WRESTLE KINGDOM 12 4 JANUARY 2018
CHRIS JERICHO HAS BEEN A FAVOURITE OF MINE FOR 25 YEARS, SO I WAS PLEASED TO WRITE HIS PROFILE.
RAW
MICK FOLEY
[PLAYSTATION] MICK FOLEY'S MY FAVOURITE WRESTLER EVER, EVEN THOUGH HE'D RECENTLY RETIRED WHEN I STARTED WATCHING.
[PLAYSTATION] THE MEAN STREET POSSE NEVER DID SEEM TO GET THE BETTER OF THE LATE CRASH HOLLY.
Crash
Pete Gas
Joey Abs
99
STUNNING FREE C-12 POSTER!
playzone
Late march issue #15
tons of cool game reviews!
latest news and previews!
awesome tips and cheats
unofficial and proud of it
AWESOME NEW PLAYSTATION MAG! OUT EVERY FORTNIGHT!
ROCK SPECIAL!
Pics Of His Victory At No Way Out!
The Rock Takes On Hollywood!
PREVIEWED
LION KING II
Join Simba On His Mighty Adventure!
REVIEWED
FEAR EFFECT 2
Is This The Goriest Game Ever Made?
FREE! HUGE POSTERS!
only 99p
WIN!
KFC Gizmos & Sheep Goodies!
WIN!
PLAYZONE IS RARELY REMEMBERED, BUT ITS WWF COVERAGE WAS EXTENSIVE – AS IT WAS FOR DIGIMON.
[PLAYSTATION] STONE COLD HITS ROCK BOTTOM IN THE DEMO THAT KICKED OFF MY WRESTLING OBSESSION.
Shamrock
01:56
Bull Buchanan
[PLAYSTATION] ONCE I REALISED SMACKDOWN! 2 HAD CUT CONTENT, I SCOURED PLAYZONE BACK ISSUES FOR EVIDENCE OF IT.

GRAPPLING GREATS

Our online fans share their championship contenders

Olivier Braillon
The very first *WWE SmackDown!* on PlayStation was not only great but it got me back into wrestling again so that was definitely huge for me!

Simon Dueck
I'm not a fan of wrestling or wrestling games, but I love *Def Jam: Fight For NY*. The street setting and hip hop soundtrack made it really accessible for me.

Noe V
King Of The Monsters. Giant monsters and wrestling? A match made in heaven! It was one of the rare SNK games I could beat on one credit.

Kris Kowalewski
As a WCW fan back in the day, *WCW/nWo Revenge* is the videogaming pinnacle for the promotion. But its Japanese cousin, *Virtual Pro Wrestling 2* was even better.

Chris Jellyman
Fun fact, I swapped *Super Mario World* just so I could play *Super Wrestlemania* because I was such a big WWF fan. *Royal Rumble* on the SNES was the better game and I spent hours playing it.

K Morgan
WWF Wrestlefest definitely. The first time I ever saw it was on a trip to the US and a nearby arcade had the big four-player cabinet. It was the coolest thing I'd ever seen.

Holzie
The *Fire Pro* series. Being able to tweak the CPU logic of user-created wrestlers and sim them against each other is endlessly entertaining.

MAILBAG

HAVE YOUR SAY... SEND US A LETTER OR MAKE YOURSELF HEARD ON SOCIAL MEDIA – **TWITTER.COM/RETROGAMER_MAG**

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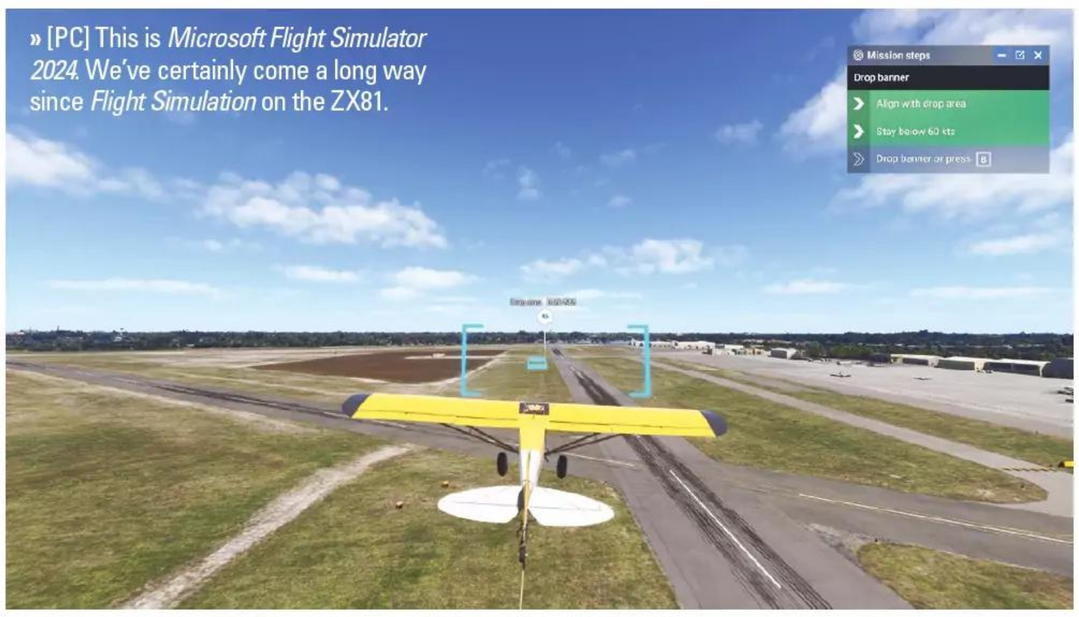
Every month, one lucky writer-in will receive a copy of one of our classic retro books from our archives. Good luck everyone!



» [PC] This is *Microsoft Flight Simulator 2024*. We've certainly come a long way since *Flight Simulation* on the ZX81.

FLIGHTS OF FANCY

Hi **Retro Gamer**,

There have been many flight sims over the years from *Ace Of Aces* on the C64 to *B-17 Flying Fortress*, *Longbow* and *Falcon* on the Amiga and PC. Recently, publishers seem to be revisiting and remastering old sims or releasing new ones with a distinct retro feel like MicroProse's *Tiny Combat Arena*. It's just a thought but have you considered a feature or article on flight sims?

Thanks,

Rob Santiago

If you enjoy flight sims Rob, you'll probably want to read this month's piece on *Combat Lynx*. Graeme Mason is our flight sim expert and he wrote a Bluffer's Guide to the genre back in issue 103 so be sure to check it out.

STEAMING AHEAD

Dear **Retro Gamer**,

Like Darran, I am also obsessed with Valve's Steam Deck. I've had an LCD model since launch and it's become my most-played system at home. After reading Darran's article in issue 270, I share many of his thoughts on the system and have already been delving into the emulation side of things. It's a little tricky to set up, but totally worth it and I've been enjoying GameCube, PSP and even Xbox 360 games on it. Add in cheap games, the ability to play lots of retro classics and continuing support from Valve and it's hard not to be impressed by it. I'd love to see some sort of feature on the Deck in the future.

Regards,

Paul Blake

We're glad you're enjoying the Steam Deck, Paul. We're sure Darran will put something together in the mag once he's done with playing *Expelled!*.

» [Saturn] Games like *Virtua Fighter 2* did a great job of highlighting the Saturn's ability.

CRAFTING EXCELLENCE

Dear **Retro Gamer**,

It's been a while since I last bothered you good chaps, but I've got to say how refreshing the new addition of Magazine Craft has been. It's literally a genius idea and always a thoroughly wonderful read. It helps that many of the magazines mentioned I still have. *Sega Saturn Magazine*, *Mean Machines Sega*, *PlayStation Plus*, *Play*, *Maximum*, *Total*, *Sega Pro*, *Gamestation*... the list goes on and on. It's just such a simple but fantastic untapped area in the history of retro gaming. Whilst I'm here though, I must ask about the in-depth piece you once upon a time said would be crafted, based on Sega's Saturn. If it's still a work in progress, can you please cover a lot of the technical side of things. I love that shit, especially when gifted programmers say how they did this and that with the hardware, what the system could

STAR LETTER

I'M GETTING BORG

Dear **Retro Gamer**,

As much as I love your fantastic magazine, I have a bone to pick with you – why have you never put a *Star Trek* game on the cover? You've done so many *Star Wars* covers now that I've lost all track of them, and yet there's never been one covering the bold exploits of Captain James T Kirk and the rest of the USS Enterprise crew. There's a surprising number to choose from, including text adventures, point-and-click adventures and first-person shooters and some of them are really good. There was even an excellent VR game when you worked on the bridge of the USS Enterprise, which I loved playing. To quote *Star Wars*, there's clearly a disturbance in the Force, and it's only right that you rectify this huge oversight by giving us the Star Trek cover we all clearly deserve.

Make it so.

Dan 'Data' Goodman

» [PlayStation] The Millennium Falcon shows off its firepower in *Star Trek: Invasion*.

Thanks for writing in, Dan. As much as we enjoy *Star Trek* (Andy is a big fan of the show) the games don't really seem to have the same mass appeal of their *Star Wars* counterparts. However, we will look at putting together a history piece and you've given us a great idea for a *Star Trek* joke to use in our next inevitable *Star Wars* feature, so we'll be sending you out a book as a reward.

» [PC] Darran's latest Steam Deck obsession is Inkle's *Expelled!*, which runs great on the Deck.

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Email: retrogamer@futurenet.com

» [PC] If Darran can find an excuse to stick *Wingspan* in the magazine, he'll do it.

DISCUSSED THIS MONTH

Blasphemous

After finishing all the Game Pass games he wanted to play, Tim did a rare thing and actually bought some games, namely *Blasphemous* and its sequel. It has led to him and Darran talking about both games and has convinced Darran that he needs to go back to *Blasphemous 2* and complete it as he was stuck on the penultimate boss.

do (especially with transparencies, polygon count) and crush all 'the Saturn couldn't do that' – when in fact it could when time and skill was applied.

Anyway, you fellas keep up the saluting work and again, kudos on the Magazine Craft segment.

Kindest regards,

Darren Nicholls

We're glad you're enjoying Magazine Craft Darren, it's certainly going down well with other readers so we'll be running it for a good while yet. As for the Sega Saturn hardware piece. Well Nick loves that shit as well, so we're sure that we can make it work.

RANDOM RULE

Hi **Retro Gamer**,

Your article on trading card games made me wonder something – have you ever considered an article on games within games? Card games in particular have been popular within videogames for a long time with the likes of Gwent and my favourite Triple Triad. However, there are other regulars too such as fishing games. Some minigames have even been popular enough to expand into their own games, such as *Chocobo Racing*. I would love to hear which ones are your favourite.

Keep up the good work.

Luke Middleham

That's actually a really good idea, Luke. We're sure Nick or Darran could easily put one of these together for the Retro Gamer's Favourite... topics.

Your say

» [Master System] Is *Phantasy Star* better than *Final Fantasy*? Robb certainly thinks so.

Every month, Retro Gamer asks a question on social media and prints the best replies. This month we wanted to know...

What's your favourite Master System game?

Damiano Gerli

Alex Kidd In Shinobi World. Good ol' times when Sega (and others) was making parodies of their own games and themes. A simple, classic, hard (but short) 2D platformer.

Stuart Gipp

It's maybe a strange choice, but I've always loved the Master System version of *RoboCop Vs The Terminator*. It's a fast-paced and thoroughly well-made shooter with tons of secrets and a lot of challenge if you're up for it.

Kiyimba

Fantasy Zone. For an 8-bit port, it manages to capture the gameplay of the arcade original, despite some changes made to the bosses due to technical limitations. It was the best home port of the game before more capable systems were available.

Alexander Davies

Mickey Mouse In Castle Of Illusion. My best friend in primary school had it and whenever I went to his house we played it religiously. He moved away before we finished school and we never finished the game but the memories of playing that game together are among the fondest from my childhood.

Retro Game Den

The SMS version of *Sonic The Hedgehog 2* is a standout for me. It's a game that I played a lot of as a kid, so it's quite nostalgic. I still find myself going back to it every so often, and I still find myself struggling to get all the Chaos Emeralds, just like back in the day.

Dr James O Butler

Psycho Fox, easily. It was the game I got with the system as part of a bundle that Christmas, along with *Double Dragon*, and how lucky I was that it was a top-notch title – even though I didn't understand the Japanese cultural components, that just added to its coolness.

Dr no yes maybe

The Lucky Dime Caper Starring Donald Duck. It looks and plays excellently. *Deep Duck Trouble* was also excellent.

Robert August de Meijer

Phantasy Star because it was on the cover of *ERSE* magazine. Best graphics ever!

Cherry Lambrini

It must be at least 25 years since I last played it, but I've always had a soft spot for *Alex Kidd In Shinobi World*. It wasn't until I actually played the original *Shinobi* that I realised it was a cross-over, but dare I say the arranged music is better? Also, it's the best *Alex Kidd* game by a mile. [Correct - Ed]

Kate

The only correct answer is *Snail Maze*.

Robb from 8/16/32bit

Phantasy Star. It started an amazing franchise, and in my opinion, it's a better game than *Final Fantasy* on the NES.

retro GAMER

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95
9

Metroid: Other M

ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS

» WII » 2010 » TEAM NINJA/NINTENDO SPD

One of the reasons I enjoy the *Metroid* series so much is because Samus Aran is such a badass character. I've always had a soft spot for bounty hunters, from Boba Fett to Duane 'Dog' Chapman and Samus always struck me as someone not to be messed with.

She's one of gaming's great protagonists and even though she may be quivering with fear inside her suit, you'd never know – and crucially, Nintendo never showed it. That all changed with *Metroid: Other M* though, and while there's plenty about the 2010 game that I really do like, the decision to give Samus a voice and greatly expand her back story isn't one of them.

We've had access to Samus' internal monologue and past before, but it's largely come through the odd bit of text or by scanning the environment, and it always played second fiddle to *Metroid*'s exploring. In *Metroid: Other M*, Samus has been turned into a mewling caricature of herself, often unsure of her actions and now saddled with daddy issues. The problem here though is, as with the 2013 release of *Tomb Raider*, her words don't reflect with what she's doing on-screen. And what she's doing on-screen is being an utter badass.

This makes sense of course because Team Ninja is no stranger to kinetic combat and *Other M* has it by the bucket-load. Boss encounters are exhilarating, striking battles that will test your combat skills to the limits, while the novel way of pointing the Wii Remote towards the screen to trigger a first-person perspective adds an additional layer of strategy to all the carnage.

Those cutscenes do pull me out of the game though, because they contrast so keenly with what I'm doing during play and what I know of Samus from her previous games. Kudos to the team for wanting to flesh out one of my favourite gaming protagonists, but I don't feel it works and it's interesting that they've never taken a similar approach with later *Metroid* games. We don't have enough strong female characters in videogames, so let's not dilute the ones we do have. ✱

ENDGAME

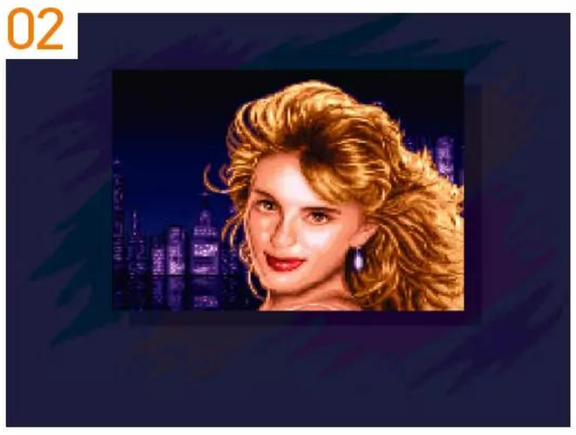
SIDE POCKET

» Of all the sport professionals out there, pool players receive the best compensation. Even the winnings from regional tournaments can feed a family of four for a decade, but you're playing on the world stage for the biggest money. So sit back and watch as we show you the dream lifestyle that can only be obtained via mastery of the cue.

01

» Congratulations, you've won the pool tournament – and now you've got a shiny trophy to show for it. But surely that can't be the only fantastic reward for your scintillating display of skill, can it?

02

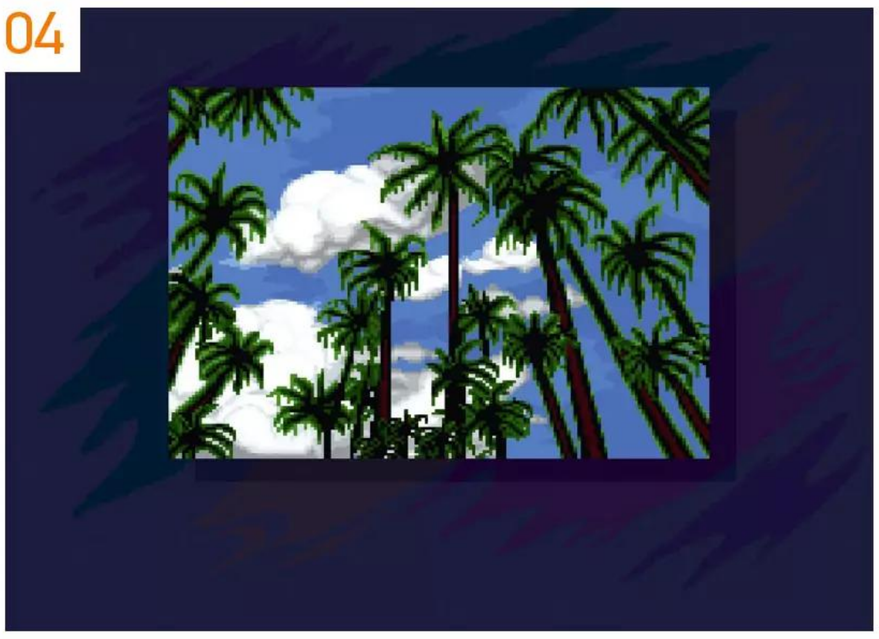


» No, it cannot. This lovely lady is now interested in pursuing a relationship with you, pretty much entirely on the strength of your ability to strike balls into other balls so they go in holes.

03

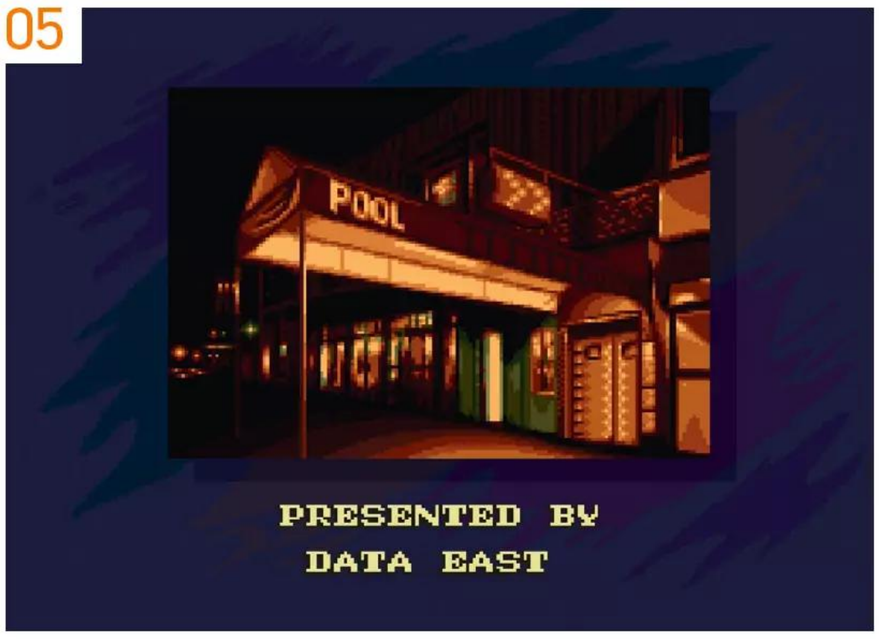
» There's also a glass. Yes, we know the glass is empty in this screenshot, but that's not the point. You can use your exorbitant winnings to fill it with expensive liquids, which may or may not contain alcohol.

04



» We can't forget the palm trees. These aren't your palm trees, mind. They're representative of the exotic, sunny destinations you'll visit now that you've won at pool. Finally, you've earned the privilege of putting the cue away, giving up the grind and enjoying a life of leisure.

05



» But you don't, do you? You tell the woman you'll call her without intending to honour the promise, you never order the drink, and you flee from the sunshine for the emotional safety of the dingy pool hall. Only you know the truth – ultimately, you're nothing without the game.

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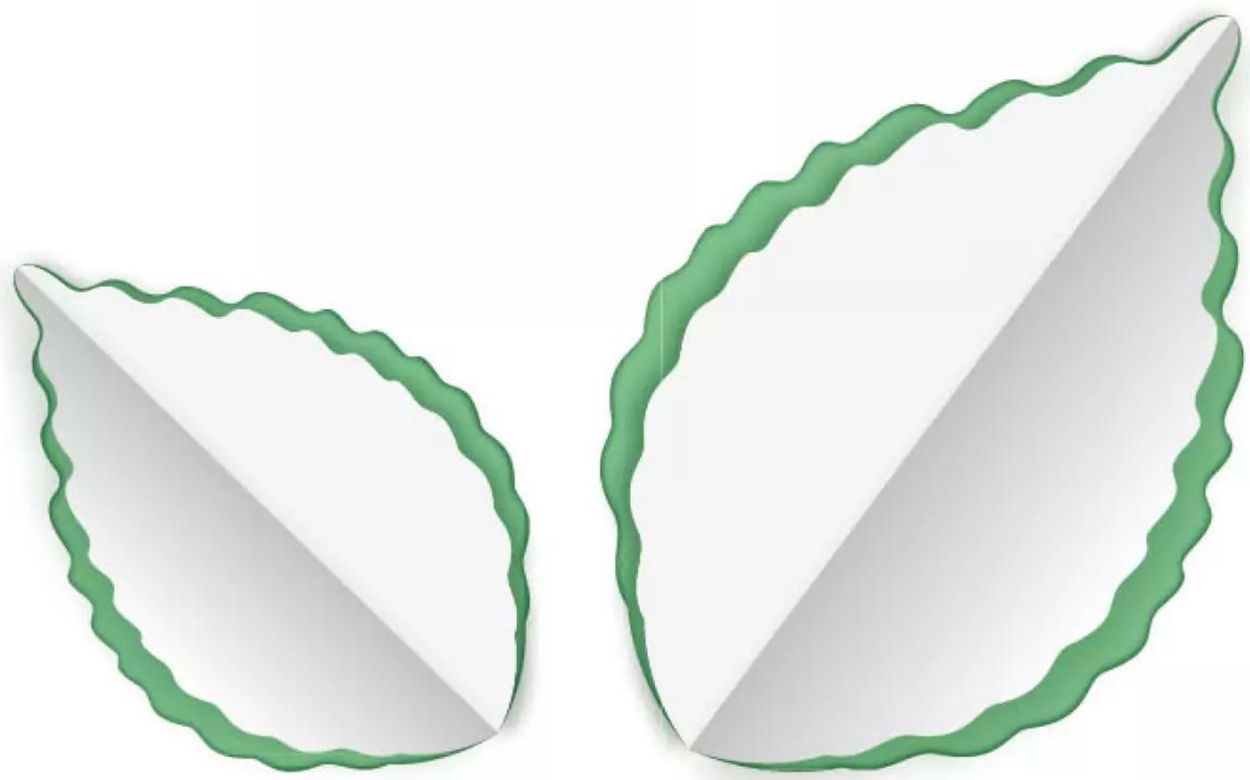

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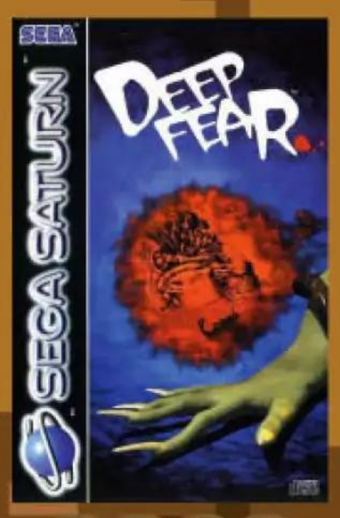

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